
An International Review of Homelessness and Social Housing Policy



An International Review of Homelessness and Social Housing Policy

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The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the Department for Communities and Local Government

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Glossary of terms

A8 Accession states: The new member states which joined the European Union (EU) on 1st May 2004 (with the exception of Cyprus and Malta). These countries are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (Australia): Australian federal housing programme agreed between the government and the states and territories. The current agreement runs from 2003-08 and will provide AUS\$4.75 bn for a variety of housing programmes including social rented housing, indigenous housing, assistance for private tenants, assistance with house purchase and crisis accommodation.

EU-15: The 15 existing members of the EU as at 30 April 2004.

Enforceable rights: Legal rights that a court of law will enforce against public authorities on behalf of individuals.

English-speaking countries: United States (US), Canada and Australia.

European Economic Area (EEA): The EU plus Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.

HLM (habitations à loyer modéré) (France): Literally 'housing at a moderate rent', HLM are public corporations sponsored by local authorities or regions (HLM-OP or OPAC); or corporations sponsored by private and public companies (HLM-SA).

Holobyt (Czech Republic): Literally 'shelters' used to house people evicted for rent arrears.

HOPE VI (US): A federal programme begun in 1992 that funds the demolition of highly distressed public housing estates and gives the former tenants vouchers to seek housing elsewhere with the objective of creating mixed and sustainable communities.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (US): Federal department with responsibility for housing.

Literal homelessness: Sleeping rough (on the streets or in another public space) or living in accommodation provided for homeless people.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (US): A generous tax subsidy created in 1986 which reduces an individual's or corporation's tax liability dollar for dollar in return for providing affordable rental housing to eligible households. There is an annual allocation of tax credits to each state by the federal government. They have become the single largest capital subsidy for affordable housing.

Municipal housing company (MHC): Type of provider of social rented housing found in Sweden and Germany usually in the form of a company owned by the local authority.

Public housing authority (PHA): Type of provider of social rented housing found in Australia, Canada and the US owned by provinces, states or local authorities.

Rooflessness: Having no accommodation of any kind (in some countries those using night shelters are also considered roofless).

'Rotterdam' Act (Netherlands): 2006 Act which permits local authorities to set relatively high minimum income requirements to limit the concentration of low income households in some areas.

Secondary housing market (Sweden): Individual flats sub-leased by local authorities for tenants whom the municipal housing companies are reluctant to house in mainstream social rented housing.

Section 8 (US): A federal housing subsidy administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It may be project-based or tenant-based. In the former case the subsidy remains attached to the property when a tenant leaves; in the latter the subsidy remains with the tenant should they leave a qualifying property.

'Social housing' (Poland): Low rent and often low quality housing used to house people who have been evicted for rent arrears, or who are very poor. It is separate from the mainstream social rented sector which is known as 'council housing'.

Social rented housing: Housing which is normally let at below market rents and which is allocated administratively.

'Very' social housing (France): A sub-sector of the HLM sector used to house very low income households and households who have difficulty in integrating into society.

Executive summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of an international comparative survey of homelessness and social housing policy commissioned by Communities and Local Government from the Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

The project was desk-based and the principal method was the circulation of a questionnaire to country experts in each of the 11 countries surveyed (in addition to England).

Clearly the extent and nature of homelessness, the policy responses to it, as well as the role of the social rented sector, depend on wider social and economic systems. For this reason, our selection of countries was drawn from four groups to reflect the role of homelessness and social housing policy within different social and economic systems:

English-speaking countries

Like England (and the wider UK), the **United States (US)**, **Canada** and **Australia** have relatively deregulated labour markets, and also like the UK, the US experienced rapidly rising levels of poverty and inequality in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike England, Australia, Canada and (especially) the US have small social rented sectors, and in the US the income maintenance federal safety net has been weakened with its conversion into a block grant programme in 1996, which specifies time-limits to eligibility, albeit with some flexibility, to funding under this programme.

West European countries

The **Netherlands** and especially **Sweden** are often held up as exemplars of social democratic countries, with generous and universal social services helping to maintain internationally low levels of poverty and inequality.

France and **Germany** also managed to avoid the large rises in inequality seen in the English-speaking countries, partly through highly regulated labour markets, although the price of this seems to have been relatively high unemployment. Germany has experienced additional social and economic problems arising from unification in 1990. France retains a significant social rented sector (20%), although Germany's has now shrunk to around 7 per cent within the context of possessing the EU's largest private rented sector (over 40%).

Southern Europe

Like its neighbours, **Spain** did not develop a strong welfare state, and instead relied more heavily on labour market regulation and welfare delivered through the extended family, and through charities. Levels of poverty and unemployment are high.

Central European countries

Since the collapse of socialism the transition has involved fundamental changes in countries such as **Poland**, the **Czech Republic** and **Hungary**, with many social and economic institutions having to be created or recreated. Economic transition has brought a degree of social disruption and homelessness has emerged as an issue to be tackled in all three of these countries.

Social rented housing

Size of sector

We identified 'social rented housing' by two essential characteristics, namely that it is normally let at below market rents and is allocated by administrative means, as opposed to price. Social rented housing played an important role in many countries' housing systems, but nowhere is it the sole instrument of housing policy, and in many countries it is a comparatively unimportant part of the housing system.

The English speaking countries in the survey have small social rented sectors – ranging from 3.2 per cent in the US to 7 per cent in Canada. In contrast the Netherlands has the largest social rented sector in Europe (35%), and although many Swedes are reluctant to use the term, their social rented sector is still important (18%) – a similar proportion to France and England.

Housing policies in the central European countries have followed different directions. Hungary privatised virtually all of its remaining social rented housing and has attained an extraordinarily high level of home ownership, while Poland and the Czech Republic have retained significant social rented or rent-controlled sectors of around 15 per cent.

The social rented sector no longer performs the role of meeting housing shortages to any great extent, and it is usually in slow relative decline due to the low level of new build. However, large absolute (hence also relative) falls in its size have occurred only where policy has aimed to achieve this, either through privatisation (Hungary and England) or where properties pass into the market sector once subsidised loans have been repaid (Germany) (see Figure 2.1).

Ownership of social rented housing

Social rented housing is owned by a variety of landlords. The model of local authority ownership is found in each of the transition economies, as well as in England. Municipal housing companies own virtually all of the social housing in Sweden and their boards are usually appointed by local authorities. Public housing authorities are the traditional form of social housing in the English speaking countries, although they are by no means the only providers. The French social rented sector is made up mostly of public corporations which are a weaker form of municipal housing company or public housing authority, in that the boards represent a broader range of interests.

Housing associations are the dominant providers of social rented housing in the Netherlands, while private landlords or developers are providers in several countries, notably Germany.

Demand

In all of the countries surveyed there was evidence of strong demand for social rented housing at the national level, although low demand is a problem in some areas. Moreover, there is compelling evidence that much of the excess demand for social rented housing reflects genuine underlying housing need that is not being met by the market.

Security of tenure

Social rented housing normally provides security of tenure – that is, the lease is not time-limited and may be terminated by the landlord only on specified grounds such as rent arrears. The main exception is in two Australian states which offer fixed-term tenancies. These are different from ‘introductory’ tenancies in England because, while they may be renewed, they do not become indefinite leases.

In many countries social landlords are reluctant to house very low income households, or other vulnerable groups who are regarded as being poor risks. These people are often housed in a sub-sector of the social rented sector, which is generally cheaper and of lower quality than the mainstream sector, and lacks security of tenure (see excluded groups, below).

Eligibility

Eligibility rules are generally set at a national level, while allocation policies are determined locally. National eligibility rules are often vague and certainly fall far short of the requirement for English local authorities to treat all applicants (except certain categories of persons from abroad and those guilty of ‘serious unacceptable behaviour’) as eligible.

Most countries employ an income ceiling for eligibility to social rented housing. It is set at a relatively low level in the US, but at a much higher level in west European countries, such as Germany, France and the Netherlands. Eligibility is lost when incomes rise above the threshold and households may have to leave the sector in some countries (eg US), but not in others (eg Germany, France and the Netherlands). Sweden and England are unusual in not applying an income limit.

Complex rules relate to the eligibility of immigrants and asylum seekers, and even among EU citizens a right to reside in another member state does not necessarily translate into eligibility for social rented housing.

Allocation policies

Allocation policies play the most significant role in systems where eligibility is broadly drawn. Thus they are comparatively unimportant in the US where eligibility is generally tightly defined and the terms of specific housing programmes heavily prescribed.

In this system, date-order is the predominant method of allocation employed among eligible households.

In Australia and Canada, households with special needs account for significantly over half of allocations and the proportion has been rising. In England allocations are predominantly needs-based, and although there is no income ceiling, tend to correlate strongly with low incomes. In contrast, elsewhere, allocations are determined by a mix of queuing and need, although, as noted below, households with the greatest needs may be excluded or diverted to less desirable sub-sectors.

In countries where local authorities sponsor social rented housing they tend to have a major influence over allocation policies. They may also have nomination rights, although these are in decline in Sweden and Germany.

Income mixing

A variety of methods are employed to encourage income mixing, ranging from the demolition of the 'worst' estates and the dispersal of the tenants in the US, to the introduction of income mixing or mixed tenure estates for new build or when estates are redeveloped (eg Australia, Canada and Germany). Other instruments employed to secure income mixing include spot purchases from the private sector, the transfer of allocation rights between old and new stock (Germany), and the planning system. Social landlords in the Netherlands can now set relatively high minimum income requirements to prevent a concentration of low income households in particular areas.

Excluded households

As noted above, various groups of households are often excluded from mainstream social housing. These include people with rent arrears, or who seem likely to have difficulty in paying the rent, people with addiction or other behavioural problems, people with criminal records, and (in some countries) people with mental health problems.

In many countries social landlords are also reluctant to house very low income households, or other vulnerable groups who are regarded as being poor risks. These people are often housed in a sub-sector of the social rented sector, which is generally cheaper and of lower quality than the mainstream sector, and lacks security of tenure. Examples of this include 'very' social housing in France, 'secondary' housing in Sweden, 'social' (as opposed to 'council') housing in Poland, *holobyt* (shelters) in the Czech Republic, and 'emergency units' in Hungary. Households gaining access to social rented housing in the Netherlands under the 'priority card' provision within the choice-based lettings system are often allocated to dwellings in a cheaper part of the sector.

Homelessness

Scale, nature and causes of homelessness

The only countries with reasonably credible data on the scale of 'homelessness' (as they define it) are the US, Australia, France, Spain, Sweden and (parts of) Germany (along

with England). But there are significant limitations of all these data sets, and none are directly comparable because they measure different things over different time scales. Most surveyed countries use some variant of 'literal homelessness' – rough sleeping and emergency accommodation use – as their definition for research and statistical purposes, but Australia, Germany and Sweden, as well as England, employ wider definitions of homelessness in generating at least some of their published statistics.

Only in Germany and England has there been a reported decline in levels of homelessness. Elsewhere, increasing levels of homelessness are reported (Sweden, the Pomerania region of Poland), there is broad stability in numbers (Australia), or the trend data is inconclusive (eg US). Most countries which lack trend data nevertheless report a consensus that it is on the rise (for example, Canada, Czech Republic and Hungary).

Everywhere except England, single unemployed men (especially immigrants and ethnic minorities) dominate the enumerated homeless population (albeit that the proportion of single women and families is rising in some places). This may reflect the lower level of protection offered to single men than families by welfare and housing systems; it is also likely to relate to the tendency for research and statistics in most countries to focus on the more extreme forms of homelessness, such as rough sleeping and emergency shelter use.

The underlying 'structural' factor usually said to be driving homelessness is a shortage of affordable rented accommodation, though in Germany and Sweden there is a greater emphasis on access than on supply. In the US and Canada, this was accompanied by a concern about the weak welfare protection for poor groups, while in the central European countries and France the impact of unemployment was cited. The main 'immediate causes' of homelessness in most countries appear to be relationship breakdown or eviction (mainly due to rent arrears). However, in some countries emphasis was also placed on institutional backgrounds, drug, alcohol or mental health problems, or other personal vulnerabilities.

A right to accommodation?

England is highly unusual in providing, for some homeless groups, a legally-enforceable right to 'suitable' temporary accommodation which lasts, in most cases, until 'settled' housing becomes available. However, legislation has recently been passed by the French Parliament (March 2007) which attempts to establish a legally-enforceable right to housing for those who have experienced 'an abnormally long delay' in being allocated social housing.

Legally-enforceable rights to emergency accommodation for homeless people are more common than rights to settled housing, but these are still confined to a minority of countries, all of them in Europe. Immigrants who are legally resident in these countries are generally entitled to emergency accommodation on the same basis as national citizens. A single jurisdiction within the US – New York City – also provides a legally-enforceable right to accommodation in certain circumstances.

In all instances of emergency accommodation entitlements, either the formal definition, or the nature of the emergency accommodation duty, implies that 'homelessness' is restricted to the threat of rough sleeping. On the other hand, the entitlement usually applies to all those accepted after investigation as homeless people (there are no 'priority' groups), and there is no test of whether they are 'intentionally homeless'.

In a number of European countries, including Spain and Sweden, there is a 'right' to housing contained in the constitution, but no legal mechanisms are provided to enable homeless individuals to enforce these rights.

State-funded homelessness programmes

While there are no legally-enforceable individual rights in most countries, legal obligations or government programmes exist to assist homeless people. In fact, there is state-funded housing assistance available to homeless people to a greater or lesser degree across all of the surveyed countries¹.

Municipalities are generally the key strategic players and 'enablers' of homelessness provision, with central/federal government usually establishing a national strategic and/or legal framework, and providing financial subsidies for homelessness services. Most direct provision is undertaken by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Targeting and prioritising who receives these services is normally left to the discretion of municipalities, NGOs and other local service providers.

West European countries generally offer reintegrative homelessness services as well as emergency provision, though the 'staircase' model upon which this is sometimes based – with homeless people obliged to spend time in emergency accommodation and then social rented sub-sectors (see above) before they have any possibility of accessing mainstream housing – came in for criticism. All of the English-speaking countries have major, often sophisticated, federal or national programmes on homelessness, but in the US at least this is compensating for a very weak mainstream safety net. Among the central European countries, homelessness provision is far more basic and crisis-focused, but things do seem to be changing, with rapidly expanding provision and the development of more strategic approaches.

Strengths and weaknesses of systems of homelessness assistance

The English speaking and west European countries provide the key examples of strengths in the system of assistance for homeless people. In particular, the emphasis on prevention in Germany, and now in England, is a significant positive measure which appears to be succeeding in reducing homelessness.

Elsewhere, it is difficult to discern positive outcomes for homeless people, although the low rates of reintegration into mainstream housing reported in a number of countries (including Sweden and the three central European countries) are indicative of negative outcomes for many. There is evidence from a five-year longitudinal study in New York City that the provision of subsidized housing was by far the most successful intervention in promoting the long-term residential stability of formerly homeless families.

¹ 'State-funded' is defined to include funding from central, regional or local government.

Conclusions

While the homelessness data reviewed in this project was not systematically comparable, it is suggestive of a link between weak welfare states, low levels of affordable housing and high levels of homelessness.

The rules governing access and prioritisation, as well as the sector's overall size, is important in defining the role that social renting plays in addressing homelessness.

A key benefit of the English (and wider UK) homelessness legislation, alongside the rules relating to eligibility and 'reasonable preference' in allocations, is that they counter the tendency to exclude the poorest and most vulnerable households from the mainstream social rented sector. The downside to this approach is that while it produces relatively good housing outcomes for low income households, it comes at the cost of spatial concentration, arising from the tendency of social rented housing to be geographically concentrated. Similar problems are encountered in the (much smaller) social rented sectors in the other English-speaking countries; and also in Sweden, although there it takes the form of intra-tenure polarisation. This problem is hardest to tackle in the countries, including England, with high levels of poverty and inequality.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

- 1.1** The Centre for Housing Policy was commissioned by Communities and Local Government to conduct a comparative international review of homelessness and social housing policies in eight other European Union (EU) countries (in addition to England), and in the United States (US), Canada and Australia (hereafter referred to as 'English speaking countries').

Context and selection of countries

- 1.2** Clearly the extent and nature of homelessness, and the policy responses to it, depend on wider social and economic systems. For this reason, our selection of 11 countries was drawn from four groups to reflect the role of homelessness and related housing policies within different social and economic systems.

English-speaking countries

- 1.3** Like England (and the wider UK), the **US, Canada** and **Australia** have relatively deregulated labour markets, and also like the UK, the US experienced rapidly rising levels of poverty and inequality in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike England, Australia, Canada and (especially) the US have small social rented sectors, and in the US the federal income maintenance safety net has been weakened with its conversion into a block grant programme (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) in 1996, which specifies time-limits to eligibility, albeit with some flexibility, to funding under this programme.

Western European countries

- 1.4** The **Netherlands** and – especially – **Sweden** are often held out as exemplars of social democratic countries, with generous and universal social services helping to maintain internationally low levels of poverty and inequality. The Netherlands has the largest social rented sector in Europe (35%), and although the Swedes are reluctant to use the term, its social rented sector is still important (18%).
- 1.5** **France** and **Germany** also managed to avoid the large rises in inequality seen in the English-speaking countries, partly through relatively highly regulated labour markets, although the price of this seems to have been relatively high unemployment. Germany has experienced additional social and economic problems arising from unification in 1990. France retains a significant social rented sector (20%), although Germany's has now shrunk to around 7 per cent within the context of possessing the EU's largest private rented sector (around 50%).

Southern Europe

- 1.6** Like its southern neighbours, **Spain** did not develop a strong welfare state, and instead relied more heavily on labour market regulation and welfare delivered through the extended family, and through charities. Levels of poverty and

unemployment are high, and although Spain has produced much subsidised social housing, virtually all of it is owner-occupied, and social rented housing accounts for only one per cent of the national stock.

Central European countries

1.7 The transition from socialism has entailed fundamental changes in countries such as **Poland**, the **Czech Republic** and **Hungary**, with many social and economic institutions having to be created or recreated. Economic transition has brought a degree of social disruption and homelessness has emerged as an issue to be tackled in all three of these countries. Housing policies have followed different directions. Hungary privatised virtually all of its remaining social rented housing and has attained an extraordinarily high level of home ownership, while Poland and the Czech Republic have retained significant social rented or rent-controlled sectors.

Research approach

1.8 The study was desk-based and undertaken by circulating a questionnaire to experts in each of the countries selected (with the exception of England). The Centre for Housing Policy then used these responses to compile this report. Thus the source for most of the material presented herein was the questionnaire responses by these country experts, and we explicitly reference any additional sources that were drawn upon. The authors are responsible for the analysis and interpretation of the information collected and all views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and should not be assumed to be shared by the country experts.

Structure of the report

1.9 The report breaks down into the following chapters: The report is structured into three remaining chapters.

Chapter 2 – an overview of the social rented sector and the role that it plays in housing systems, including its size; which groups are eligible to be housed by social landlords; and the operation of allocation policies, particularly with regard to groups who are vulnerable to homelessness.

Chapter 3 – an overview of the scale, nature and causes of homelessness in the surveyed countries; any rights to accommodation which exist in those countries; and the availability of state-funded assistance designed to prevent and tackle homelessness.

Chapter 4 – conclusions.

1.10 A profile of 'key facts' on both social housing and homelessness policies for each of the selected countries can be found in Annex 1.

Chapter 2: The Social Rented Sector

Introduction

2.1 Social rented housing became a significant feature of the housing system in many countries in the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War. For the purposes of this report we have defined social rented housing as possessing two essential characteristics:

- it is normally let at below market rents; and
- is allocated (or rationed) according to administrative criteria (as opposed to price).

2.2 The implication of this definition is that social rented housing is not defined by:

- public ownership, because social rented housing is often supplied by non-statutory organisations and sometimes by the private sector; or
- not-for-profit status, as some social rented housing is supplied by for-profit landlords (although the scale of the profit is usually limited), and in any case not-for-profit landlords are able to accumulate surpluses.

2.3 The tenure has been used to perform three distinct though not discrete functions:

- a supply function: to help to meet housing shortages and to improve the quality of housing supply
- a broad affordability function: to make good quality housing more affordable; and
- a safety-net function: to provide housing to households who would otherwise be unable to access it through the market (Stephens *et al.*, 2002).

2.4 The relative importance of these functions has varied both between countries and within them over time.

2.5 While the importance of the new supply function has declined in almost every country, there remain large differences in the levels of production of social rented housing. While the sector is still expanding in absolute terms in some countries (notably France), virtually everywhere else it is either slowly declining in relative terms as development lags behind that in other sectors, or more rapidly as the number of units fall, usually as a result of privatisation policies.

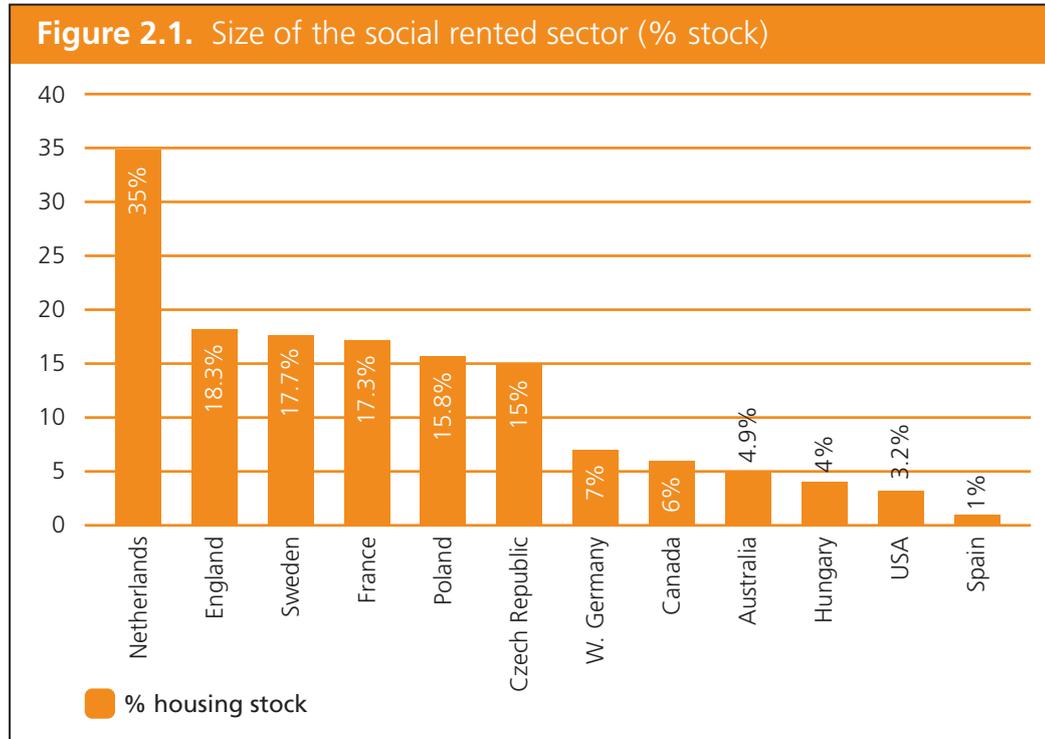
2.6 Consequently, the principal dividing line between the role of social rented housing in different countries falls between those countries where the emphasis is placed on the achievement of a broad affordability objective, and those where a much greater importance is attached to a safety-net function.

- 2.7** As a rule of thumb among the west European and English-speaking countries, those countries with high levels of poverty and inequality favour its use as a safety net, while those with less poverty and inequality favour the broader affordability approach, and sometimes exclude the poorest and most marginal households from it. It is common for such countries to establish sub-tenures which serve to separate these groups from the mainstream social rented sector. The pattern can also be identified in the formerly socialist countries in central Europe.
- 2.8** The word 'social' in social rented housing is one that carries with it certain connotations that are not always met. A policy of tenure neutrality and income mixing in Sweden led many commentators to object that the country had no social sector, because it implied that this housing was highly residualised public housing. Today, in Sweden the term sometimes raises objections because the municipal housing companies (MHCs) are seen as being increasingly reluctant to prioritise households in most need and indeed to erect barriers to prevent them from gaining access. A similar objection arises in the Czech Republic where, as in the other central European countries, the social rented sector is largely a legacy of the socialist period, when housing was often allocated by 'merit' – itself a fertile debating point – as opposed to need, hence did not seem to be especially 'social' in its orientation. However, we have included the Swedish municipal housing sector and the rent-controlled part of the Czech local authority sector in this survey of social rented housing because they exhibit the essential characteristics of the sector outlined above.
- 2.9** We have also decided to exclude some housing from the survey, even though it might be viewed as being part of the sector. For example in the US part of the social housing programme lowers the rents in properties in which an eligible tenant resides, but the subsidy is lost when they leave. We have excluded this housing as the subsidy mechanism is more like a housing allowance or voucher. We have also excluded the Polish co-operative sector developed before 1980 from the social rented sector due to the lack of administrative allocation, though we note that tenant co-ops are eligible for supply-side subsidies from the National Housing Fund. Identifying the role of social rented housing is complicated further because while it is identified by its ownership in many countries, social rented housing is sometimes identified by subsidy streams to a variety of owners, notably in Germany and to an extent also in the US.
- 2.10** It should also be noted that social rented housing is nowhere the sole means to achieve housing objectives, and that this report does not attempt to analyse the role that other key interventions, such as housing allowances (such as Housing Benefit in the UK), play in the housing system². Indeed social rented housing is a comparatively unimportant element in wider housing policy in some countries, such as Spain and the US.

²See Kemp, P.A. (ed.) (2007, forthcoming). This provides details of the housing allowance system in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, US, Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the Czech Republic.

Size of the social rented sector

2.11 There is a great deal of variation in the scale of social rented housing.



Australia (2001); Canada (1997); US (1999); West Germany (2003); France (2002); Netherlands (2006); Spain (2001); Sweden (2005); England (2005); Czech Republic (2001); Hungary (2001); Poland (2002).

Source: country experts, except England: Housing Statistics (live tables)

2.12 Figure 2.1 shows that the English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada and the US) have quite small social rented sectors, ranging between just 3.2 per cent of the stock in the US to 7 per cent in Canada. In the US in particular the same emphasis was never placed on social rented housing as was the case in much of western Europe, not least because much housing policy was directed at widening access to home ownership through a variety of mechanisms including mortgage insurance (dating back to the 1930s) and Government Sponsored Enterprises (such as Fannie Mae).

2.13 In contrast, in western Europe England, Sweden and France each have social rented sectors that make up around 18 per cent of the stock. The Dutch social rented sector remains by far the largest in Europe at 35 per cent of the stock – almost twice the size of England's, which is the next largest among this selection. In each of these countries social rented housing was a key instrument in removing housing shortages.

2.14 Spain (in common with other southern European countries) has a very small social rented sector. During the Franco era Spain developed large subsidised building programmes, but virtually all of this housing became owner-occupied. The housing plans have continued following the transition to democracy and while subsidies are available for the development of rental housing, very generous tax subsidies to home owners mean that this tenure remains the principal recipient of subsidies.

2.15 The formerly socialist countries have distinct histories having operated under a different political and economic system for around 40 years and since then experiencing rapid transition. Each of the three transition countries included in this survey (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) shared features of the 'East European Model of Housing' notably state control over housing construction regardless of tenure, and allocation by a mixture of need and 'merit' (housing being a source of differentiation/reward in an otherwise quite flat income/reward structure) (see Tosics 1998). Nonetheless there was variation within this model, especially as the state-orientated system began to fail in the 1980s. Attempts were made to mobilise households' own resources for housing which included the development of co-operatives in Poland and self-build home ownership in Hungary. These variations were reflected in much larger public rental sectors in (what is now) the Czech Republic and Poland than in Hungary. Today, Poland and the Czech Republic still retain much bigger social rented sectors (15-17%) than Hungary (4%), which has emerged as one of several 'super home ownership' states in the former Soviet bloc.

Trends

2.16 While social rented housing no longer enjoys the pivotal role it once played when housing policies were directed at large-scale subsidised production, there is no uniform pattern of rapid decline, and certainly no evidence of a general and inexorable rise in home ownership, which, for example, has run up against access and affordability barriers in the English-speaking countries.

2.17 The social rented sector has, however, generally experienced a gradual relative decline in recent years, arising mostly from its lower share of new construction. In France the absolute size of the social sector continues to grow within a wider context of relative decline. Nonetheless, the social rented sector is larger in relative terms now than it was in 1980 in France, as it is in the Netherlands. The Swedish social rented sector has been shrinking in absolute terms in recent years due to demolitions in low-demand areas and the transfer of stock to the private sector in nine municipalities.

2.18 The exceptions to the pattern of slow relative decline arise in those countries where there has been a large drop in the absolute size of the tenure, which reflects specific policies:

- In Germany, more than in any other country, the imperative of social rented housing was to remove housing shortages, and this is reflected in the availability of subsidies to a variety of landlord types, including private landlords. When in receipt of subsidy private landlords were obliged to let housing to eligible households on social terms, but when the subsidies expire the housing passes into the private rental sector. This accounts for most of the fall in the size of the social rented sector in West Germany since it peaked at around 19 per cent of the stock in the late 1960s. In Germany as a

whole, further reductions in the social housing stock have arisen from large-scale demolition in the former East Germany (due to depopulation) and the transfer of housing owned by Municipal Housing Companies in cities including Dresden to private sector landlords.

- In England, the 'right to buy', that has resulted in some 1.9 million sales to sitting tenants since 1980, has played a significant role in reducing the size of the sector from about 30 per cent in 1980 to 18 per cent in 2005.
- In the formerly socialist countries previously publicly owned dwellings have been sold to tenants; among those countries included in the survey, this process was most pronounced in Hungary where the social rented sector fell from about 23 per cent in 1990 to just four per cent in 2001.

The ownership of social rented housing

2.19 The countries selected for this study illustrate the main models of social landlord:

- **Public ownership:** While the traditional British model of ownership and management by the (local) state is very unusual in the west, public housing in the formerly socialist countries has now generally been transferred to local authorities. Virtually all social rented housing in the Czech Republic and Hungary is now owned by local authorities, and almost three-quarters in Poland is under local authority ownership.
- **Municipal housing companies (MHCs):** almost all social rented housing in Sweden is owned by MHCs which take one of two forms: foundations which have no shareholders, and companies in which the local authority owns all of the shares. Local authorities appoint the boards of these companies and most of the foundations. In the largest urban centres there is more than one MHC so in principle there is a degree of competition. In Germany, nearly one-fifth of the social rented sector is made up of MHCs. MHCs enjoy a much greater degree of operational independence than the direct public ownership model.
- **Public Housing Authorities (PHAs):** PHAs are the traditional form of social landlord in the English-speaking countries. They are similar to MHCs in the sense that they enjoy relatively high levels of operational independence. They are generally organised at state level in these federal systems, with the state government appointing the boards. Around 85 per cent of social rented housing in Australia and about 30 per cent in the US is supplied by PHAs.
- **Public Corporations:** the French model of social housing is made up of companies which are in effect a weaker form of MHC or public housing authority. The public corporations are part of the wider HLM sector (*habitations à loyer modéré* or social housing at a moderate rent). They come in two forms: HLM-OPs (*offices publics* or public corporations) which are

formed by communes, municipalities or regions and their boards are made up of representatives of local government (one-third), central government (one-third), tenants (one-fifth) and financial institutions (13%); and HLM-OPACs (*offices publics d'aménagement et de construction* or public corporations for management and construction), which tend to be larger as reflected in their boards which have 15 as opposed to seven members. Interests are represented in roughly the same proportions. Some 54 per cent per cent of social rented housing in France is part of the public corporation sector³.

- **Housing associations and other not-for-profit organisations:** virtually the entire Dutch social rented sector is provided by housing associations. As in England there has been much merger activity in recent years and some very large organisations operating across regions now exist. Various forms of not-for-profit NGOs provide some social rented housing in Australia, Canada, the US, Germany and Poland.
- **Private landlords and developers:** the role played by private landlords in the German social rented sector has already been noted. In the US some social rented housing is provided by private landlords, whose properties are inspected and approved. Like not-for-profit providers (such as Community Development Corporations) they are able to use 'Section 8' project-based subsidies or various funds including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit to reduce rents. When an eligible tenant leaves they are replaced by another eligible tenant and the property remains in the social rented sector. However, another form of subsidy (the tenant based 'Section 8' subsidy) attaches a voucher to the tenant, so the property ceases to be in the social rented sector when the tenant leaves. As noted above, we have not treated this as social rented housing, as the subsidy is more like a housing allowance or voucher. In France around 46 per cent of the HLM sector is provided by private corporations (HLM-SA or *sociétés anonymes d'HLM*) which are offshoots of large firms with abundant and mobile labour (eg railways, post office, car manufacturers), financial groups (eg insurance companies) and charity organisations.

³ Around 8 per cent of the French social rented sector is provided by *Sociétés d'Economie Mixte*, which are essentially private companies with a high level of municipal sponsorship. They are intended to provide housing for households whose incomes, although modest, are too high to qualify for the HLM sector (McCrone & Stephens, 1995).

Table 2.1 The provision of social rented housing

| | Principal Providers | Other Providers |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Australia | PHAs (85%) | State and community-managed Indigenous housing; NGOs |
| Canada | PHAs | Not-for-profits; co-ops |
| US | Not-for-profit providers and private landlords/ developers utilising Section 8 project based subsidies and Low Income Housing Tax Credit (69%) | PHA (31%) |
| Germany | Data not available | Private landlords MHCs (est. 18%) Other housing companies |
| France | Public (50%) and private (42%) corporations in the HLM sector (92%) | <i>Sociétés d'Economie Mixte</i> (SEM) – public-private partnership landlords (8%) |
| Netherlands | Housing associations (99%) | Very small local authority sector |
| Sweden | MHCs (95%) | |
| England | Local authorities (54%) | Housing associations (46%) |
| Czech Republic | Local authorities (100%) | |
| Hungary | Local authorities (100%) | |
| Poland | Local authorities (73%) | Companies (14%) Government (11%) Housing associations (2%) |

Source: country experts, except England: Housing Statistics (live tables)

Demand for social rented housing

2.20 It is highly problematic to gain comparable data on the relative demand for social rented housing; indeed it is usually very difficult to gain reliable indicators for even a single country. However, the survey does suggest that in every country there is a general level of unmet demand for social rented housing, which is often acute.

Indicators of demand for social rented housing

2.21 Waiting lists provide a crude indication of demand for social rented housing. They need to be treated with some caution especially if they are not renewed regularly, and in cases of acute shortage (Australia, for example) falls in the numbers of people on waiting lists are indicative of the small chance that applicants have of gaining access to social rented housing in the foreseeable future, as well as tightening restrictions on eligibility. Applications compared with turnover also provide a crude idea of the balance between demand and supply.

- In Australia there are more than 200,000 outstanding applications for public housing in a sector of around 356,000 dwellings.
- In Canada at least 150,000 households are on waiting lists for rent-geared-to-income housing (predominantly public housing), with waiting times being at least 3-5 years and in some areas as long as 10 years.
- In the US among the PHAs that do maintain waiting lists, the typical waiting time is eight to ten years.
- In France 1.04 million households applied for social rented housing in 2004, and with a turnover of 10 per cent this contrasts with a theoretical availability of 420,000 units, a ratio of 2.5:1.
- In Hungary the demand for properties is 10-15 times greater than the supply (where properties are available and where data available).
- Areas of especially high housing pressure, provide further evidence of unmet demand:
 - in Prague the typical waiting time for social housing is 10 years;
 - in Munich there are 15,000 households registered for social housing compared to 3,500 allocations per year, a ratio of 4.25:1.

Indicators of housing need

2.22 There are no cases of generally low demand for social housing in the countries surveyed, which is what we should expect since rents are normally set below market-clearing levels. However, it is important to distinguish between unmet housing demand and unmet housing need. Using the length of waiting lists in relation to available properties can be expected to some extent represent excess demand rather than necessarily unmet housing need. This applies in particular to those countries where eligibility is widely drawn.

2.23 While some of the excess demand for social rented housing arises from its attractive pricing, the examples below suggest that a very substantial demand arises from underlying housing need derived from an inability to afford market housing of a reasonable standard:

- In the US nearly 5 per cent of families had 'worst case housing needs' in 2005. A household has 'worst case housing needs' if their income is less than 50 per cent of median household incomes adjusted by local housing market (Area Median Incomes – AMI), and who either pay more than half their monthly income on rent or live in substandard housing. Of those with worst case housing needs, 77 per cent were on incomes that were 30 per cent lower than AMI. The correlation between low incomes and 'worst case housing need' is clear as two-thirds of families with incomes lower than 30 per cent of AMI face worst case housing needs. Severe rent burdens account for more than 90 per cent of worst case housing needs.
- In Canada in 2001 nearly 14 per cent of households had 'core housing needs'. This means that their housing fell below minimum standards for adequacy, suitability or affordability *and* the median rent on housing in the local market that met all of these criteria exceeded 30 per cent of their gross household income.
- Nearly one-third of households on waiting lists in Poland have eligibility for 'social flats'. Households faced with eviction, who experience poor living and financial conditions, or face an emergency need (eg due to demolitions) have eligibility for 'social flats' which are flats let at very low rents (less than half the rent of the lowest rent on a standard council flat) and sometimes offer very basic conditions.

Low demand

2.24 Low demand for social rented housing has become a problem in some parts of England, and there are also examples of low demand in the other countries surveyed:

- The most acute case of low demand for social rented housing is in the former East Germany where many areas face depopulation as families move to the former West in search of employment. There are some 1 million empty houses in East Germany and it is expected that 300,000 of them will be demolished by 2009.
- In some of the remoter population centres in Sweden, depopulation has occurred and has led to MHCs encountering financial difficulties and receiving state aid. Inevitably, demolition programmes have been necessary.

It is notable that these cases of low demand reflect general population decline, rather than a fundamental shift in housing preferences away from social rented housing.

Security of tenure

2.25 Social rented housing normally provides tenants with security of tenure – that is with an indefinite lease that may be terminated by the landlord only on specified grounds, such as rent arrears.

2.26 In some countries the protection provided to tenants is very strong indeed and even where there are grounds for eviction, the landlord may face a lengthy process to reclaim the property:

- In the Czech Republic households whose tenancies began in 1989 or before have very strong security and the eviction process which until recently took up to three years still takes 6-12 months.
- In Hungary there are often moratoria on evictions, for example in winter, or a policy of not evicting large families.
- In France eviction is also a lengthy and expensive process.

2.27 In England, various measures have been introduced in relation to anti-social behaviour that modify the general rule of security of tenure being granted to tenants of social landlords:

- Social landlords may use probationary tenancies ('introductory tenancies') for new tenants, usually lasting one year. At the end of the period the introductory tenancy automatically converts to a standard tenancy offering security unless possession has been sought or the landlord decides to extend the probationary/trial period.
- Since June 2004, under legislation designed to tackle anti-social behaviour social landlords can apply to the courts for a 'demotion order' to convert a tenancy offering security into one with less security.

2.28 In some countries, including Canada and the US, social tenants may lose their tenancies if their incomes rise above eligibility thresholds. In contrast, when this happens in France or Germany the tenant may be asked to pay a supplementary rent, although enforcement is patchy.

2.29 In Australia two state governments are introducing fixed-term tenancies for new social tenants, and other states are reported to be watching these cases with interest:

- Since January 2006, new tenants in Queensland have been given fixed term ('periodic') tenancies which are reviewed every four years (or 10 years if the tenant is aged 65 or over or is in receipt of a disability support pension). If a tenant is judged to be no longer eligible for social rented housing they will be given assistance in transferring to the private rented sector.
- Since July 2006, new tenants in New South Wales have been offered two, five or ten year fixed-term tenancies to reflect the level and duration of a household's need, taking into account age and household size. According to examples given by the state government, a young trainee could expect to receive a two year lease; a family with young children a five year lease; and an elderly household a ten year lease. Eligibility reviews will take place six months before the expiry of a lease, which may either be renewed for another fixed period or allowed to expire.

2.30 While the Australian examples of fixed-term tenancies apply to access to the mainstream social rented sector, other countries use sub-lets to house marginal groups:

- In France non-governmental organisations (NGOs) specialising in housing people who have difficulty in integrating into society are able to obtain leases from social landlords. The NGO then sub-lets the property to an individual. There are a few thousand such cases each year.
- In Sweden, social services use sub-leasing in order to attach additional conditions to the tenancies of vulnerable tenants, such as the requirement to follow an individual action plan, or to desist from drinking or smoking in the flat, or not to have overnight guests, or to accept visits from social workers.

Eligibility

2.31 Eligibility describes the groups who *may* be housed by social landlords. The usual framework for determining eligibility for housing is that broad principles are set by national government, while regional/local governments or individual landlords determine the details, usually through the allocations system. However, the extent of national influence varies considerably:

- In several countries the degree of national direction is token. In Australia and the Netherlands the national law is vague, and in the case of Australia the principles of eligibility established in the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement carry no legal force. Hungary shares this pattern with very vague national legislation, and eligibility and allocation criteria determined locally.
- In Sweden there are no specific national rules concerning eligibility.
- In England, the Homelessness Act 2002 removed the previous power of English local authorities to implement blanket exclusions of certain categories of applicant (for example, on grounds of age or lack of local connection). This was replaced with a power to decide that individual applicants are ineligible for social housing because of 'serious unacceptable behaviour', such as anti-social behaviour or serious rent arrears. The threshold for exclusion is set quite high: the behaviour has to be serious enough that it would have entitled the local authority to a possession order had the applicant been a secure tenant (although local authorities do have wider discretion with regards to taking into account behaviour in allocations, see below). With this exception, and that of certain categories of persons from abroad (see below), local authorities must treat all applicants for housing as eligible.
- Income limits are often determined at a national level, as in France, Spain and Germany. In France a very crude geographical variation applies reflecting differing housing costs (ie greater Paris; the Ile-de-France; and the rest of France). In Germany the income criteria may be varied by the states. Income limits are discussed further below.

- Eligibility criteria are often built into the design of specific programmes. For example, many programmes funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD, the US federal department responsible for housing) carry detailed eligibility criteria. The criteria of those schemes funded locally, are determined locally.
- In some countries individual landlords may be able to subvert national rules. For example, in the US it is illegal to exclude applicants on the ground that they are in receipt of social assistance, but there is no obstacle to constructing an indirect bar by demanding that applicants have three months' rent in the bank.

2.32 Among the countries covered in this survey, only Sweden, England and some local authorities in the Czech Republic do not apply an income limit on eligibility. Elsewhere access to social rented housing is means-tested⁴ (Table 2.2). The most common means-test is based on income. As noted above, in the US if income rises above the eligibility threshold, the housing may be lost; in France and Germany supplementary rents may be charged. Asset tests are rarer, the most common form being the interest on savings being treated as income (eg Australia and Germany). Of course the extent to which means-tests limit eligibility depends on their severity. While we have no absolutely comparable information, it is clear from the size and composition of the tenure that the means-test in the US and Australia is very much more severe than that used in Germany (where almost 40 per cent of households are eligible) and the Netherlands (some 35 per cent of the stock is in the social rented sector). Indeed other allocation criteria, such as other indicators of housing need or time waited, may be more important in determining who is housed. Although neither Sweden nor England operate an income limit and each country has a social rented sector of a similar size, it is clear that in practice access to the English social rented sector is targeted on lower income households.

2.33 It is also striking that several countries require potential tenants to have a minimum income before being granted a tenancy. In Australia, most states apply an 'independent income test'; most Swedish MHCs apply some kind of test; and various minimum incomes are required depending on the rents charged in the Dutch social rented sector. In the Netherlands the minimum income requirements arise from the practice of some social landlords to build expensive housing with rents that many households would be unable to afford. It has been estimated that some 20 per cent of the social rented stock is let subject to a minimum income. In the Czech Republic some social tenancies have even been auctioned by the local authority to the person willing to pay the highest rent.

2.34 Clearly social landlords wish to protect their financial viability, and this lies behind the widespread practice of excluding applicants who either have been evicted for rent arrears or who have outstanding rent arrears. Records of anti-social behaviour and (occasionally) criminality can also lead to exclusion.

⁴The term is widely used, though it can be misleading. It means that eligibility is subject to an income (and sometimes asset) limit. It does not mean that the rent is necessarily varied according to income (as with rent-geared-to-income housing in Canada, for example).

Table 2.2 Eligibility Rules for Social Rented Housing – (a) English Speaking countries

| | Minimum income | Maximum income | Other resources | Minimum age | Limits on size of property | Exclusions – groups | Exclusions – behaviour | Local residence qualification |
|------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Australia | Usually an 'independent income test' | Yes | Notional interest on savings Ownership of another residential property normally leads to loss of eligibility | 18 (exceptionally 16-18, eg lone parent) | Yes. 'Locational needs test' applied in high demand areas, ie must determine good reason for wishing to live in area | None – unless unable to live independently | Varies by State. New South Wales: – arrears; – criminal behaviour | Usually |
| Canada | – | Yes (in most but not all provinces) | Asset test in some provinces | 16-18 (depending on province) | Yes | None – but some projects targeted on certain groups, eg mentally ill or disabled | Arrears and others | – |
| US | Sometimes de facto, eg 3 months rent saved | Yes Federal government schemes = <80 per cent Area Median Incomes | – | – | – | People with felony convictions | – | – |

Table 2.2 Eligibility Rules for Social Rented Housing – (b) EU-15 Countries

| | Minimum income | Maximum income | Other resources | Minimum age | Limits on size of property | Exclusions – groups | Exclusions – behaviour | Local residence qualification |
|--------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|-------------|----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Germany | No | Yes – about 40% of households qualify | Interest on savings | 18 | Up to each state | None | Arrears, behaviour | Sometimes, especially where shortages |
| France | No | Yes | No | None | No | No | No, but may affect nominations | No, but prioritisation likely to favour residents |
| Netherlands | Yes – varies according to type of housing | Yes | – | – | Yes | No | No, but de facto will | Sometimes |
| Sweden | Often | No | Savings an advantage, though not requested | 18 | – | If evicted for any reason. Arrears outstanding; court order for other debts | Bad payment history Previous neighbours' complaints | Some give priority to incomers for economic reasons |
| Spain | No | Yes | – | 18 | Yes | No | No | Varies by local authority |

Table 2.2 Eligibility Rules for Social Rented Housing – (c) EU A8 Accession Countries

| | Minimum income | Maximum income | Other resources | Minimum age | Limits on size of property | Exclusions – groups | Exclusions – behaviour | Local residence qualification |
|-------------------|----------------|---|---|---|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| England | No | No – but can take resources into account in allocations | No – but can take resources into account in allocations | Normally 18 – guidance discourages independent tenancies being offered to 16-17 year olds without support | Yes | Various categories of persons from abroad | Local authorities have power to exclude those guilty of ‘serious unacceptable behaviour’ | No longer lawful to exclude on basis of lack of local connection; but can take into account in allocations |
| Czech Rep. | – | Yes – for new flats only | – | – | Yes – for new flats | – | – | Almost always – usually 2 years |
| | | Some LAs have no limit for old flats; some even auction flats | | | | | | |
| Hungary | – | Yes | – | – | – | If had empty dwelling or used to be social tenant in past 3-5 yrs (most LAs) | Arrears and squatters (no address) | Almost always |
| Poland | – | Yes – though vary by type | No | 18 | – | No | Arrears may be excluded from council flat but may entitle to social flat | Outlawed by Supreme Court, but still affects prioritisation |

Source: country experts “–” = information not supplied

2.35 Residence qualifications are frequently applied either at local or regional/state level. Even in Poland, where the Supreme Court has outlawed exclusions on this basis, the allocation system itself often gives priority to local residents – a clear indication that eligibility does not guarantee access.

Immigrants

2.36 The eligibility of immigrants to social rented housing is summarised in Table 2.3. In general, legal immigrants are eligible for social rented housing, though eligibility may not be gained immediately.

2.37 The legal position concerning EU and EEA citizens who move to another member state is complex. People with employment or self-employment in the host state enjoy a right to reside there, as do students, people in receipt of pensions, people who are self sufficient, people who are seeking employment and anyone else for a three month period. However, this does not translate into an automatic eligibility for housing. In England, for example, workers from other EU countries are eligible immediately for social housing, but in the case of registered workers from the A8 Accession states, their eligibility on the basis of being a worker is lost should they become unemployed during the first 12 months of employment. An indication of the degree of complexity that exists is that the rules vary *within* the UK, and an A8 worker who loses their job when resident in Scotland retains their entitlement to social housing.

2.38 The position surrounding A8 workers is less relevant in most other EU-15 member states, as access to their labour markets is far more restrictive than is the case in the UK, Ireland and Sweden. This position is changing as restrictions are lifted in various EU-15 states, as they must be in their entirety by 2009⁵.

2.39 The position of asylum seekers and other immigrants also varies between the countries in this survey. A recent law in the Netherlands, which is intended to limit the inflow of immigrants, compels landlords to verify the legal status of their tenants, and the termination of residence permit has been added as a legal ground for the termination of a tenancy. In France it is illegal for social landlords to house illegal immigrants – the *sans papiers*. In Germany some local authorities (eg Stuttgart) apply a maximum quota of the proportion of social housing allocated to non-EU citizens (in the case of Stuttgart, 20 per cent). In many countries, residence and other rules (eg the requirement for landlord references in Sweden) may act as a barrier to social housing. In England (and rest of UK) asylum seekers and persons given leave to remain on condition that they have no recourse to public funds are ineligible for social rented housing⁶.

⁵Though some exemptions will be allowed in exceptional cases till 2011.

⁶In the UK, accommodation and other support for asylum seekers is provided through the National Asylum Support Service. Individuals granted refugee status are eligible for social housing and housing assistance under the homelessness system on same basis as UK nationals.

Table 2.3 *Eligibility for Social Rented Housing of Immigrants

| Eligibility for Social Rented Housing | |
|--|--|
| English-speaking countries | |
| Australia | Yes if permanent residents or are refugees; no if applying for/holding temporary protection visa, or are a sponsored migrant. Ineligible households may receive temporary/emergency assistance |
| Canada | Yes if permanent legal resident or refugee, or have made application to become permanent resident. Refugees may have priority status. |
| US | Yes if lawful immigrant or refugee |
| EU-15 | |
| Germany | Yes, if from EU-15 or EEA; A8 (until April 2009) only if granted residence permit; Outside EU; if have residence permit for at least 1 year (includes guest workers and refugees) |
| France | Yes, if have permission to reside and work in France |
| Netherlands | Yes, but landlords must verify legal status of tenants, and termination of residence permit has become a legal ground for terminating a tenancy |
| Sweden | Yes, but landlord will check identification |
| Spain | Yes |
| England | Yes if EU 'worker' or 'self-employed', or have other right to reside and are habitually resident (but if from A8 eligibility on the basis of being a worker is lost if they stop working within the first 12 months of employment); yes if refugee; no if asylum seeker or have been given leave to remain on condition of no recourse to public funds |
| EU A8 Accession Countries | |
| Czech Republic | Yes if EU citizen, but no if from other EEA countries; yes if have permanent residence permit which is granted after 10 years of living and working in the country |
| Hungary | Yes, in principle |
| Poland | Yes, if have settlement permit or EU residence permit, or in connection with seeking refugee status |

*Please note that this table concerns complex legal matters, and the country respondents were providing only general summary information rather than specific legal advice on the eligibility of those with different forms of immigration status.

Allocations

- 2.40** The allocations process determines which eligible applicants actually gain access to social rented housing, and how long they have to wait for it. As we have seen these operate within (usually) national frameworks which determine the pool of eligible households. Clearly the relative importance of the allocations system in part depends on the degree of filtering that has taken place when determining eligibility. For example, in the US, housing subsidy programmes are generally very highly and narrowly prescribed so allocation policies have only a limited role in determining access. In contrast very little filtering takes place by restricting eligibility in England, so the allocations system is much more important than in the US.
- 2.41** Table 2.4 indicates that in all countries other than Spain and the formerly socialist countries, landlords have a role in determining the allocation policies. In France, Germany and the Netherlands the landlords have a large degree of freedom to shape their own allocation policies, although in France there are extensive nomination rights granted to local and state governments, and sometimes also to employers who pay the 1 per cent payroll tax for housing. In Germany and Sweden local authority nomination rights are in decline. In Germany this arises from the loss of leverage as social stock is transferred to the private sector, and the related decline in local authority waiting lists. In Sweden it is connected to local authorities' loss of a legal entitlement to nomination rights to private rented flats in 1993, which led many authorities to conclude that the continuation of nominations only in public housing would lead to residualisation. In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland it is local authorities as the principal providers of social rented housing that determine allocation policies.
- 2.42** In England, local authorities are obliged to publish an 'allocation scheme' which prioritises those in greatest housing need, and takes account of a list of statutory 'reasonable preference' categories (such as statutory homeless persons, those with medical needs, those living in unsatisfactory housing, etc). They can add their own preference criteria to their allocation scheme, but these must not be allowed to dominate the statutory categories. With regards to the relative priority given to applicants within the reasonable preference categories, local authorities are explicitly permitted to take account of, among other factors, ('good' and 'bad') past behaviour, the existence or otherwise of a local connection, and applicants' financial resources.

Table 2.4 Determination of allocations policies

| | Landlord | Local/Regional Government | Nomination Rights |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| Australia | ✓ | ✓ (public housing) | Rare |
| Canada | ✓ | ✓ | |
| US | | ✓ | |
| Germany | ✓ | ✓ (in some local authorities, eg Stuttgart and Munich) | Local authority waiting lists are becoming rarer, as are nominations |
| France | ✓ | ✓ | State and local government have nomination rights (50%); employers paying 1 per cent payroll tax for housing may have up to 50 per cent nomination rights in large cities |
| Netherlands | ✓ | | Operating within local authority framework |
| Sweden | ✓ | ✓ | Local authority nomination rights have become rarer |
| Spain | | ✓ | |
| England | ✓ (within legal and regulatory framework) | ✓ (local authority housing) | Local authorities usually have nomination rights for housing association housing |
| Czech Republic | | ✓ | |
| Hungary | | ✓ | |
| Poland | | ✓ | |

Allocation criteria

2.43 Since allocation policies are determined at local level/regional levels or by individual landlords there is often much variation in the criteria used to allocate social rented housing among eligible groups. The following policies are common:

- **Chronology:** the time waited is the principal means of determining allocation to social rented housing among eligible groups in the US. The eligibility criteria are so strict and the availability of housing so scarce that there is a widespread view that it is impossible to prioritise between eligible households.

- **Need and chronology:** it is rare for systems not to take into account the time waited at all, but in many systems the relative weight placed on need is more important. In Canada and Australia, where chronological systems were once commonplace, the importance placed on need has increased since the 1970s, to the extent that the proportion of allocations to households in special needs groups have continued to grow in each of the component sectors of the social rented sector. In Canada special needs allocation accounted for 58 per cent of allocations to public housing; 70 per cent of community housing and 48 per cent of indigenous housing in 2004/05. Similar proportions of allocations to special needs groups were made in Australia in 2004/05. In Canada 17 per cent of all allocations were made to homeless households in 2002/03.

2.44 Many systems attempt to find a balance between applicants' housing needs and the time they have been on the waiting list. The 'priority card' for needy groups within the Dutch system of choice-based lettings is one example, and it is common practice for a specific part of the cheap stock to be reserved for people who succeed in obtaining such a 'priority card'. In Canada so-called 'modified chronological' systems allow a quota for special needs while 'priority placement' allow special needs to gain priority with no quota set.

2.45 Filtering sometimes also takes place at the point of allocation. The French system which does not exclude groups from eligibility is able to filter out unwanted applicants through the nomination system. While allocations have to be explained, nominations do not. Criteria such as the ability to pay the rent may come into play at this stage also.

2.46 Some unusual practices include:

- **Lottery:** uniquely, there is a tradition of allocating social housing in Spain according to a lottery.
- **Auction:** sometimes Czech local authorities allocate flats to the person willing to pay the highest rent.

Allocation process

2.47 Allocation processes tend to be similar in broad outline, involving initial registration with a local authority or with individual providers. In France people may also register with an employer if they have nomination rights. In countries where eligibility needs to be determined (for example the verification of income or medical criteria) this process takes place at the time of application (eg Canada, Poland), when the applicant is near the top of the list (eg US), or both at the time of allocation *and* immediately before letting (eg Australia).

- 2.48** Unless there is a monopoly provider of housing in an area, applicants generally have to register with more than one provider to maximise the chances of being offered a tenancy. In Stockholm a single register (run by an agency) has been established covering both the city and the surrounding suburban local authorities. Nonetheless, individual landlords may set their own allocations policy. Waiting lists are often maintained actively and applicants must re-register (and sometimes pay an annual fee) to avoid being removed.
- 2.49** Choice-based lettings systems provide the main alternative to standard waiting lists, and are employed by the majority of landlords in the Netherlands. The promotion of choice-based lettings within social housing is now also a key policy priority in England, with the Government aiming to have a choice-based allocation scheme in all local authorities by 2010.
- 2.50** Details vary, but almost everywhere penalties are imposed if applicants reject a certain number of reasonable offers.

Income mixing

- 2.51** In any system there is likely to be a trade-off between targeting social rented housing at households with the greatest needs and attempting to ensure that communities are mixed income. The issue has two dimensions. One is inter-tenure polarisation and the other is spatial polarisation. Where mono-tenure estates exist tenure polarisation must also accompany spatial polarisation; but where estates are mixed tenure polarisation need not lead to spatial polarisation. It is important to note that the absence of tenure polarisation does not guarantee freedom from spatial polarisation, as poor households may nonetheless be concentrated in the same areas (intra-tenure polarisation).
- 2.52** It is common for highly targeted needs-based systems to be associated with both tenure and spatial polarisation. It is also the case that some countries with a much greater mix of incomes in the social rented sector, nonetheless experience spatial polarisation arising from intra-tenure polarisation. The French *grandes ensembles* are a good example of this as they often house a high proportion of low or very low income households – and this is especially notable given the comparatively high representation of households from higher income deciles in the sector as a whole. Intra-tenure polarisation is also a feature of the Swedish housing system with the better off tenants tending to live in the more popular centrally-located properties, while lower income households tend to live on the less popular peripheral estates. Because the peripheral estates have been built more recently and rent pooling is not commonly practiced, the system can be additionally regressive with the poorer households paying higher rents for less desirable properties (Stephens *et al.* 2002). As in France there is an ethnic dimension to polarisation and there are several estates in Sweden where the majority of residents are immigrants, and schools have few indigenous Swedish pupils.

2.53 The following policies have been adopted to reduce spatial polarisation:

- **Redevelopment:** it is quite a common practice for redevelopment to involve the replacement of mono-tenure social housing estates with mixed tenure estates, for example in Australia, Canada and Germany. The best known scheme is the US HOPE VI programme whereby federal funds are employed to demolish especially 'bad' public housing estates and replace them with schemes that include no more than 25-33 per cent of the former residents. Displaced tenants are given vouchers, although the rent limits are such that they are unlikely to move to neighbourhoods with much higher incomes.
- **Mixed income estates:** new estates are often built with an attempt to mix incomes. For example, in the Netherlands inexpensive properties are mixed with more expensive ones. Because the social rented sector as a whole is mixed in the Netherlands it is possible for such estates to be mono-tenure. In Canada not-for-profits and co-ops are more likely to provide mixed income housing than the PHAs.
- **Planning system:** in Spain the intention is that 25 per cent of housing on new developments should be 'social', although this may vary.
- **Spot purchase of properties:** Canadian and Australian social landlords sometimes purchase properties on the open market.
- **Transfer of allocation rights:** in Germany the social obligations of social landlords to allocate new subsidised properties on social terms can be transferred to older estates owned by the same landlords which are no longer subsidised and therefore can be let on market terms. Landlords may also be exempted from social obligations.
- **Restrict access to low-income households:** in the Netherlands, following lobbying by Rotterdam Council, a new law (the 2006 'Rotterdam Act') permits local authorities to set relatively high minimum income requirements to limit the concentration of low income households in some areas. This has been applied to the central area of Rotterdam, which covers half the city's population.

Excluded households

2.54 In all of the countries surveyed there is a reluctance by social landlords to house certain groups, principally people with:

- rent arrears or who seem likely to have difficulty meeting rental payments
- drug or alcohol problems
- other behavioural problems
- criminal records; or
- mental health problems.

- 2.55** Where households are excluded from mainstream social rented housing, two institutional responses may help them to avoid sleeping rough, staying in emergency homeless shelters, having to stay with a succession of friends or relatives, etc.
- 2.56** First, NGOs, traditional church or other charities provide a key response in many countries. In addition to accommodation (sometimes using sub-leases), support may include rent guarantee schemes; indemnity schemes to protect landlords against losses (damage); help with re-establishing credit records; legal aid; and help to live independently. Such initiatives have grown in Germany since the late 1980s, for example.
- 2.57** A second, though not very well documented, response in several countries is the use of specialist sub-sectors within the social rented sector, which are used to house less desirable tenants:
- In **Sweden** a 'secondary' housing market exists whereby individual flats are sub-leased by local authorities to tenants whom MHCs are reluctant to house in mainstream housing. The tenants do not have security of tenure and additional grounds are attached to tenancy agreements, often by social services, requiring tenants to conform to certain patterns of behaviour, or to follow certain plans. Refusal to allow entry to a social worker may also result in eviction. Sometimes households are also excluded from this sector leaving them with virtually no safety net.
 - In **France** a 'very social' sector was established in 1990 to house people with very low incomes or with difficulty in integrating into society. The rent is lower than the standard HLM rent (80%) as is the income ceiling (60%). Sub-leases, without full security of tenure, are sometimes used. The 'very social' sector represents 2.5 per cent of the HLM stock (ie fewer than 100,000 units) and about 7,000 units of very social housing are built each year.
 - In the **Czech Republic**, *holobyty* (shelters) are used to house people evicted for rent arrears. They are spatially concentrated – often on the edge of cities or in villages close to urban centres. Roma households and households regarded as being socially problematic are over-represented in this sub-sector.
 - In **Hungary** 'emergency units' form a cheap and substandard part of the social rented sector, and are used as the last resort before homelessness provision is called upon. Emergency units are used to house mostly households that have accumulated large rent arrears or have been evicted from other social dwellings. Emergency units are sometimes, but not always, concentrated spatially.
 - In **Poland**, the social rented sector is differentiated between standard council flats and 'social' housing. 'Social' housing has very low rents (no more than 50 per cent of the lowest rents in the mainstream council sector) and is often of low quality. It is used to house people who have been evicted for rent arrears, or are very poor.

Conclusions

2.58 This chapter has reviewed the scale, scope and operation of the social rented sector. The main findings are:

- The scale of the social rented sector is relatively large in many European countries, including England, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland and the Czech Republic. It is much smaller in Germany, Australia and Canada; and very small indeed in the US, Hungary and Spain.
- The sector has undergone a rapid absolute and relative decline only in countries where it has been the deliberate policy to reduce the size of the sector. Sales of properties to tenants in England and the formerly socialist countries have had this effect, although the extent of such privatisation has been much more limited in Poland and the Czech Republic compared to Hungary. The German social rented sector has also declined greatly in absolute size due to the design of subsidies that allow properties to pass to the market sector once the subsidy has been repaid.
- There is evidence in every country that there is strong demand for social rented housing. While in some countries such demand may to an extent simply reflect the fact that the rents are set below market levels, there is much evidence of demand arising from unmet housing needs.
- Access to social rented housing is determined by two rationing devices: eligibility criteria, which are often determined nationally (for example through income ceilings); and allocation policies, which are generally determined locally by local government or by individual providers.
- The relative importance of allocation systems depend on the number of households who are eligible and the stock available. In the US eligibility criteria are very narrowly drawn so the importance of allocations policies is much less than in Sweden where eligibility is very wide.
- Generally, those countries with high levels of income poverty and inequality tend to target their social rented sectors more narrowly than those with less poverty and inequality. However, spatial polarisation is a feature of both systems that exhibit tenure polarisation and those that exhibit much greater income mixing within the tenure as a whole.
- In all countries surveyed some groups tend to be excluded from social rented housing. These include people with rent arrears, people with drug or alcohol problems, and people with behavioural problems. People with mental health problems are sometimes prioritised (eg Australia and Canada), but in other countries they may find themselves excluded from the mainstream sector.
- In several countries, sub-sectors of the social rented sector exist to house these groups. Specialist housing agencies may also help such households to find accommodation in the private sector. If they fall through these safety nets then they will very likely become homeless.

Chapter 3: Homelessness

Introduction

3.1 This chapter turns to the subject of homelessness, specifically, the scale, nature and causes of homelessness in the surveyed countries; an examination of the extent to which there is a 'right' to accommodation; the nature and scope of state-funded assistance available to homeless people; and a broad assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the system of homelessness assistance.

Scale, nature and causes of homelessness

Scale of homelessness

3.2 This section provides a broad outline of the available data on the scale of homelessness in the surveyed countries (see Table 3.1). Unfortunately, as these countries measure different things over different timescales, using different methodologies, a systematic comparative analysis is not possible. Moreover, the quality of data within countries is often poor and extremely patchy. A recent analysis of homelessness data across Europe concluded that:

'...very few countries collect and publish national level data on a systematic and regular basis on even the narrowest definition of homelessness – rough sleeping. [There is a] patchwork quilt of information available within countries between national, regional and municipal levels of government.' (Edgar & Meert, forthcoming)

3.3 Many countries – including France, Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, and the three central European countries – use something akin to the US definition of 'literal homelessness' for estimation and research purposes (albeit that all definitions vary in specific respects). This definition includes:

- people sleeping rough; and
- those using emergency shelters or transitional housing programmes.

3.4 On the other hand, Australia, Germany and Sweden, as well as England, use wider definitions of homelessness in generating at least some of their published statistics. Clearly these varying definitions of homelessness impact upon the scale and nature of the problem identified. The 'legal' or 'official' definitions used to delineate rights to accommodation or eligibility for state-funded homelessness assistance programmes often vary from these 'research' definitions (sometimes they are wider, sometimes narrower). Details of legal and policy definitions are discussed in the relevant sections of this chapter.

English-speaking countries

- 3.5** The US clearly has a massive homelessness problem – and provides probably the best data of all the countries surveyed:
- three national ‘stock’ (point-in-time) estimates are available, the latest of which, in 2005, identified 730,000 people homeless across the US (of whom rough sleepers comprised an estimated 29 per cent);
 - annual prevalence estimates indicate that around one per cent of the population, and up to 10 per cent of the poor population, experience at least one day/night of ‘literal homelessness’ in the US over the course of a year representing some 2.5-3.5 million people a year. When the time window is extended to five years, the proportion rises to three per cent of the US population (7 to 8 million people)⁷;
 - the available trend data (based on ‘stock’ estimates) is subject to different degrees of statistical precision, and therefore it is not clear if homelessness is increasing or decreasing in the US.
- 3.6** Like the US, Australia has relatively rigorous data on homelessness, and in 2001, 99,000 people were reported as experiencing homelessness on Census night (representing 0.5 per cent of the population). However, the Australians adopt a much wider definition of homelessness than the Americans, and this figure includes people staying temporarily with family and friends (almost half the total), and those living in ‘lodging houses’ (a quarter of the total). Around 14 per cent of those enumerated as being homeless were sleeping rough. Trend data indicates relative stability in the numbers of homeless people in Australia.
- 3.7** There are no comprehensive figures on the scale of homelessness in Canada, but it is estimated that a minimum of 150,000 people use shelters there each year (approximately 0.5 per cent of the population), and that rough sleepers comprise less than 10 per cent of the overall homeless population. No robust trend data is currently available⁸, but there is a consensus that homelessness has increased in severity over the past 15 years (Gaetz, 2006).

⁷ As a point of very rough comparison, the Survey of English Housing in 1994/95 found that 4.3 per cent of heads of household had experienced homelessness over the previous 10 years (Burrows, 1997).

⁸ The federal government is currently in the process of developing a national information system on users of homelessness shelter services – ‘Homeless Individuals and Families Information System’. This should provide comparable trend data across Canada on this element of the homeless population.

EU-15 countries

3.8 Across Europe, data collection on homelessness comprises a range of approaches (Edgar & Meert, forthcoming).

3.9 First, a number of EU countries conduct surveys of homeless people, usually those sleeping rough or in emergency accommodation:

- In France, survey methods have traditionally been used⁹, employing definitions close to the US 'literal homelessness'. The most robust survey, which took place in January 2001, found that 86,000 homeless people (16,000 of them children) used a shelter or hot meal service in metropolitan France over the course of an average week (8 per cent of whom were sleeping rough).
- In Spain, the first ever nation-wide survey of people using homelessness services, published in December 2005, generated an estimate of 21,900 homeless in urban areas (Carbrera, 2006). Almost one quarter (22%) of those enumerated as homeless were sleeping rough, with the remainder in emergency and other forms of homeless accommodation, or squatting. As with the French survey, this was a one-off exercise and thus no trends can be discerned from this data.
- In the federal German system, there is no national system of homelessness data collection. However, service providers make annual estimates of the national prevalence of homelessness which indicate a drop from 590,000 homeless people in 1996/1997 to 310,000 in 2003. While this national trend data is compromised to some extent by changes in methodologies over time, more robust regional data (from North-Rhine Westphalia, based on surveys of those in temporary accommodation as a result of the statutory provisions discussed below) confirms a downward trend. Decreases have been reported also in the regions of the former East Germany (from 1997 onwards). However, an opposite trend (towards increased homelessness) has been noted in some expanding cities in the south of Germany.
- There is no reliable national-level information on the scale of homelessness in the Netherlands. It is assumed that there are about 25,000 to 30,000 homeless people across the country, but this estimate is based on old data. However, in recent years estimates about the size of the roofless population have been made in several Dutch cities using capture-recapture methods. In Utrecht, for example, it was estimated that around 1,200 people were roofless over a two week period in 2005 (0.5 per cent of the city's total population) (Wolf & Mensink, 2006).

⁹ Though there is now growing use of register methods in France (see Edgar & Meert, forthcoming).

- In England, street counts of people sleeping rough are conducted by local authorities, in partnership with local homelessness agencies, with national results published by central government. In 1998 a national target was set of a two thirds reduction in levels of rough sleeping by 2002; this target was met and has been sustained. The latest estimate, in June 2006, is that there are around 500 people sleeping rough across England on any single night¹⁰. As with all street counts of rough sleepers, the actual estimates provided cannot be assumed to be comprehensive, but as the counts have been conducted on a consistent basis the (downward) trend can be relied upon.

3.10 Second, *surveys of local authorities* are conducted in some European countries to estimate the numbers of homeless people in contact with services over a specified period:

- In Sweden, repeat national surveys have been conducted of local authorities and other agencies in contact with homeless people. The latest survey, in April 2005, identified almost 18,000 individuals as having experienced homelessness over the course of a typical week – an estimated increase of 30-45 per cent since 1999¹¹. The definition used here is considerably wider than that of literal homelessness in the US. It includes the ‘houseless’ living in various institutional settings, as well as some of those living temporarily with friends or relatives, but, unlike in the UK, not those living in accommodation which it is ‘not reasonable’ to expect them to occupy. The comprehensiveness of this survey is undermined by its being limited to only those homeless people in contact with social work and health services: those in contact with housing agencies only are excluded.

3.11 Third, *register methods* are used in some European countries, including (a) official returns from local authorities; and (b) NGO client record systems:

- The main source of data on homelessness in England are the ‘official homelessness statistics’ which record households ‘accepted’ by local authorities as having an entitlement to accommodation (see below)¹². These figures therefore exclude all those homeless households who do not present to local authorities or are not accepted as fulfilling the statutory criteria. Over the course of 2006, there were 76,860 households accepted as statutorily homeless across England¹³, and on 31 December 2006 89,510 households were staying in temporary accommodation awaiting settled housing¹⁴. Numbers of households assisted under the homelessness legislation have fallen significantly in recent years, with a 43 per cent reduction in ‘homeless acceptances’ between 2003 and 2006¹⁵.

¹⁰ www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1150131 (15 February 2007).

¹¹ Some of this increase may be accounted for by changes in the definition of homelessness and by an expansion in the services covered in the survey.

¹² The official homelessness statistics on households accepted by local authorities cannot be combined with the data on rough sleepers recorded in street counts. Other ‘official’ sources of data on homelessness in England, which cannot be combined with the two just discussed, are the ‘CHAIN’ database, used by agencies working with rough sleepers in London, and the national Supporting People database.

¹³ Communities and Local Government Statistical Release. Statutory Homelessness: 1-4th quarters 2006. England. Table 4.

¹⁴ Communities and Local Government Statistical Release. Statutory Homelessness: 4th quarter 2006. England.

¹⁵ Communities and Local Government Statistical Release. Statutory Homelessness: 1-4th quarters 2006. England. Table 4.

- In the Netherlands, two NGO client registration data systems ('Regas' and 'Clever') are now in development, with the intention that they will provide a comprehensive national database on homelessness from around 2009 (Wolf & Mensink, 2006)¹⁶.

A8 Accession countries

3.12 In all three of the central European countries surveyed the national data available on homelessness is very patchy, and based largely on NGO street counts of people sleeping rough in the main cities:

- In **Poland**, it is estimated that there are 80,000 homeless people nationwide, but detailed research surveys have been conducted in only one region (Pomerania), where data from 2001, 2003 and 2005 indicates that it is on the rise.
- In **Hungary**, only a rough national estimate is available of between 20,000 and 30,000 homeless people. More precise data exist for Budapest: one night in February 2005, 8,000 'literally homeless' people were identified, of which a strikingly high number (3,000) were said to be sleeping rough (Gyori, 2005)¹⁷. There is no robust trend data, but service providers report increasing numbers of people in 'crisis situations'.
- In the **Czech Republic**, only very rough NGO and Government estimates are available: these vary between 3,000 and 6,000 homeless people. Homelessness is said to be increasing, but no substantive trend data are available.

¹⁶ The CHAIN database, used by agencies working with rough sleepers in London, and the national Supporting People database, could also come into the category of client record systems.

¹⁷ As a point of comparison, the 1991 Census (carried out before the rough sleepers initiatives described below had really had an impact) indicated that there were around 1,300 people sleeping rough in London, which is a much larger city.

Table 3.1 Homelessness data summary

| | Research/Survey Definition | Robust Data at National Level | Trend |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Australia | Wider than literal homelessness | Yes | Stable |
| Canada | Literal homelessness | No – but being developed | No trend data but thought to be increasing |
| US | Literal homelessness | Yes | Inconclusive |
| Germany | Wider than literal homelessness | Yes – comparatively robust, but best data confined to West Rhine Westphalia | Decreasing |
| France | Literal homelessness | Yes | Unknown |
| Netherlands | Literal homelessness | No – but being developed | Unknown |
| Sweden | Wider than literal homelessness | Yes – though concerns about coverage | Increasing |
| Spain | Literal homelessness | Yes | Unknown |
| England | Wider than literal homelessness | Yes – for priority need groups and rough sleepers | Decreasing |
| Czech Republic | Literal homelessness | No | No trend data but thought to be increasing |
| Hungary | Literal homelessness | No | No trend data but thought to be increasing |
| Poland | Literal homelessness | No – but reasonable regional data for Pomerania | Data from Pomerania suggests increasing |

Source: country experts, except England (own analysis)

The causes of homelessness

3.13 It is an extremely complex matter, in both theoretical and empirical terms, to comment on the causes of homelessness across countries. In particular, whether primarily 'structural' or 'individual' factors are identified may well be influenced by the dominant research traditions and ideological assumptions in different national contexts, as much as by the varying 'realities' of homelessness (Fitzpatrick & Christian, 2006). Linked to this, our country experts laid varying degrees of emphasis on the 'immediate' ('proximate') triggers of homelessness, and more 'underlying' causal factors. Moreover, as countries varied in the definitions of homelessness employed for research purposes, they are commenting to some extent on the causes of different types of phenomena. These points must all be borne in mind in reading this section.

English-speaking countries (including England)

3.14 In the US and Canada, and also within England (and the wider UK), there now seems to be a consensus that:

- a. structural factors, especially a shortage of affordable housing, are the fundamental drivers of the overall scale of homelessness; but
- b. personal problems and 'trigger' events (such as relationship breakdown, mental health problems, and substance misuse) increase an individual's vulnerability to homelessness. (Metraux, & Culhane, 1999; Pleace, 2000; Fitzpatrick & Christian, 2006):

3.15 In England and Canada, housing affordability is particularly emphasised in the more prosperous regions (London and the South in England; in the surging local economies of Alberta and the North in Canada), while it seems to be a more national-level concern in the US. In both the US and Canada, the concern with housing supply and affordability is accompanied by a recognition that the weak (mainstream) welfare provision for poorer groups, which has contracted in recent years, is also a key factor.

EU-15 countries

3.16 In Germany the housing market is also seen as crucial to the overall scale of homelessness. The reduction in homelessness reported above occurred in parallel with rising levels of poverty and unemployment across Germany, indicating that a slackening housing market in most regions, together with targeted municipal efforts to prevent homelessness (see below), have been the key factors underpinning this success. Access to housing (rather than housing supply or affordability per se) is now viewed as the key issue in Germany, with the scope for municipalities to influence allocations in the direction of 'need' reducing in recent years as the social housing sector contracts (see Chapter 2). The single most important trigger for homelessness in Germany is eviction due to rent arrears, with relationship breakdown and exclusion by parents also key factors amongst single people.

- 3.17** In France, similarly, the main immediate causes of homelessness were reported to be relationship breakdown, rents being too expensive and eviction, though unemployment was also cited. Also in Spain, eviction is identified as a primary immediate cause of homelessness, but another major contributory factor is said to be ‘immigrants in vulnerable situations’ (see below), while addiction to drugs and alcohol were identified as both causes and consequences of homelessness.
- 3.18** In Sweden, the debate on homelessness appears to have a stronger (albeit controversial) individualistic tenor than in the countries reviewed above, and government ministers have claimed a strong association between homelessness and drug misuse. This position is supported by data from a major survey in 1999 which found that 77 per cent of identified homeless individuals had a drug addiction (Sahlin, 2005a). However, as noted above, this survey was compromised by including those in contact with health/social work services but excluding those who were only in contact with housing agencies. Our country expert has argued that the main problem is, in fact, the difficulties that homeless people now face securing ‘regular’ rental housing in Sweden (see Chapter 2). As in Germany, the concern is as much with issues of housing ‘access’ as supply.
- 3.19** Likewise, individual factors appear to have had a somewhat higher profile in the analysis of homelessness in the Netherlands than elsewhere, with our country expert drawing a close association between ‘psychosocial’ issues – problematic use of hard drugs and psychological problems – and homelessness. However, a causal model has now been adopted in the Netherlands’ *Homelessness Action Plan* (see below) which includes structural factors (such as inadequate housing, low income and unemployment) as well as psychosocial issues. Key triggers to homelessness recognised in this Plan include eviction and leaving institutions (particularly prison and psychiatric hospital).

A8 Accession countries

- 3.20** In all three of the central European countries the main immediate causes of homelessness were reported to be relationship breakdown (the largest category), or eviction due to rent arrears or other ‘economic’ causes (including other debts and unemployment). Leaving institutions (including prisons and children’s homes), and drug and alcohol problems were also mentioned. Underlying structural conditions in both the labour market (unemployment and low wages) and the housing market (lack of affordable accommodation) were specifically cited in Hungary.

The nature of the homeless population

- 3.21** The US was able to provide the most detailed data on the profile of its homeless population (defined as those who are ‘literally homeless’ – sleeping rough or staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing programmes). On any given day:

- the majority of the adult population using homelessness assistance programmes in the US are single men (61%)
- another 15 per cent are single women
- 15 per cent are families with children (though families constitute a higher proportion over the course of a year, as they experience more short-term homelessness); and
- ethnic minorities are overrepresented: two-fifths of both homeless families and single homeless people are African American (as compared to approximately 12 per cent of total US population); and around 7 per cent are Native American (around 1 per cent of total population).

3.22 Similarly, in both European and English speaking countries the majority of identified households were single men with ethnic minorities being heavily over-represented. For example:

- In **Australia**, Indigenous peoples are greatly over-represented: although only 2 per cent of the Australian population identify as Indigenous, over 16 per cent of people receiving homelessness services were Indigenous in 2003/4.
- In **Canada**, most homeless people are men (although the proportion of single women and families is increasing). Aboriginal people are overrepresented, and a significant proportion of recent immigrants (especially refugees) experience homelessness.
- In **France**, the majority of those identified as homeless are unemployed lone men, and a high proportion (one third) have a foreign nationality.
- In **Germany**, most homeless households comprise single people (mainly men), and as families have benefited most from municipal prevention programmes, their proportion in the homeless population has been falling.
- In the **Netherlands**, the majority of homeless people are single men, with an average age of 39. Their physical and mental health is poor, and it is estimated that 40 per cent have both psychiatric and physical problems (Wolf & Mensink, 2006).
- In **Spain**, the overwhelming majority of those affected by homelessness are single men, average age 38, and a high proportion (42%) are immigrants.
- In all three of the central European countries surveyed a typical homeless person was said to be an unemployed single man, usually in his middle years (30-60 years old) (though in Hungary the proportion of women is said to be increasing).

3.23 The dominance of single men in the homeless population across the surveyed countries may appear to contrast with England, where the majority (65%) of households assisted under the homelessness legislation are families with dependent children (mainly led by a female lone parent) or a pregnant woman¹⁸. But several points must be borne in mind:

- The official statistics in England largely focus on homeless people who fall within the 'priority need' groups, of which the predominant group, in practice, has been families with dependant children. It is notable that in Scotland (where local authorities have traditionally been more generous in their interpretation of priority need), only around one third of homeless acceptances relate to families with children or a pregnant woman¹⁹.
- Most other countries employ a definition of homelessness that is narrower than the 'statutory' definition in England (described below), usually with a heavy emphasis on rough sleeping/shelter use (as noted above). A large-scale survey of single homeless people sleeping rough or using hostels, conducted in England in 1991, similarly reported a great preponderance of men, usually aged between 25 and 59 (Anderson *et al.*, 1993).
- Data from most other countries are derived from stock ('point-in-time') counts, or counts with very short 'reference periods' (eg one week). These approaches will tend to exaggerate the proportion of single men (who tend to be longer-term homeless), and correspondingly underestimate the proportion of families (who tend to be shorter-term homeless), as compared with what would be indicated by annual prevalence data (as provided by the main official statistics in England).

The relationship between the scale, nature and causes of homelessness

3.24 In drawing this section to a close, it may be worth reflecting on the potential links between the scale, causes and nature of homelessness in different countries. One of the authors (Fitzpatrick, 1998) has hypothesised that countries with benign social and economic conditions – well functioning housing and labour markets and generous social security policies – will have a low overall prevalence of homelessness, but that a high proportion of their (relatively) small homeless populations will have complex personal problems. She has posited that the reverse will hold true (high prevalence/low proportion with support needs) in countries with a more difficult structural context.

¹⁸ During 2005/6, 53 per cent of households accepted as homeless contained one or more children, another 12 per cent contained a pregnant woman. (Communities and Local Government Statistical Release. Statutory Homelessness: 1st quarter 2006. England. Table 4.)

¹⁹ Family homelessness has been declining in both absolute and proportionate terms in Scotland for well over a decade (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2005).

3.25 While the current study was not designed to test this hypothesis – that would require original, comparable data across all of the relevant countries – our interpretation of the information supplied does fit this broad hypothesis, with Sweden and the Netherlands at one end of the spectrum (countries with strong welfare states)²⁰ and the US at the other (with a very weak and diminishing welfare safety net)²¹. Our German country expert also confirmed that this hypothesis would fit with the experience in that country, of ie declining levels of homelessness being accompanied by a proportionate increase in support requirements amongst the homeless population (Busch-Geertsema, 2005).

A right to accommodation?

3.26 Our starting point in the analysis of state-funded housing assistance was the legal entitlements of homeless people in each of the 11 surveyed countries. This is of particular interest because England (and the wider UK) has traditionally employed ‘enforceable’ (‘justiciable’) legal rights – ie rights which courts of law will enforce on behalf of individuals – as a principal mechanism of ‘empowering’ homeless households and ensuring that their housing need is met. Thus we investigated the extent to which a similar approach had been adopted in other countries.

3.27 Before considering the specific position in individual countries, it is worth making the general point that attempts to harness international law to establish an enforceable ‘right to housing’ for homeless people have thus far been unsuccessful, at least within Europe (Kenna, 2005). This is true even of ‘monist’ states like France where, in principle, the provisions of ratified international treaties should override domestic law (Kenna & Uhry, undated). Likewise, while in a number of European countries, including Spain and Sweden, there is a ‘right’ to housing contained in the national constitution, no legal mechanisms are provided to enable homeless individuals to enforce these rights. For example, in Spain the constitutional provisions merely oblige the authorities to promote the ‘necessary conditions’ for the right to be fulfilled. In Sweden, our country expert has noted that:

‘The constitution ... includes the word “right” but this was never interpreted to mean that there was an enforceable right to housing for the individual citizen’.
(Sahlin, 2005a, p. 15)

²⁰ Other western European countries not included in the present survey, such as Denmark, report a similar pattern (ie low prevalence/high support needs) (Fitzpatrick, 1998).

²¹ This hypothesis may seem somewhat undermined by survey data from the US that indicates that only one quarter of homeless adults did not report mental health or substance use problems over the past year (Burt, 2001). However, this is most likely this is explained by the narrow definition of homelessness adopted in US surveys – homeless people sleeping rough or in hostels in the UK also report high levels of these sorts of problems (Anderson *et al.*, 1993). There is robust longitudinal evidence on homeless families in the US which established that access to affordable housing, rather than other forms of support, is what determined their successful resettlement (Shinn *et al.*, 1998).

3.28 It is possible that such constitutional rights may have legal consequences, as courts in these countries will make efforts to interpret national legislation in such a way as to be consistent with constitutional provisions. Constitutional rights may also have an impact on policy, as appears to be the case in Finland, for example, where a constitutional right to housing is said to have influenced the use of public funds and the activities of relevant authorities (Fredriksson, 2006). It was beyond the scope of this project to examine case law and policy debates in the surveyed countries to ascertain whether there was any impact arising from constitutional provisions. But it is clear that these constitutional rights do not provide the clear legal entitlements that pertain in England and rest of the UK, as now discussed.

Enforceable rights leading to settled housing for homeless people

3.29 As Table 3.2 makes clear, England (and the rest of the UK) was highly unusual amongst the surveyed countries in providing, for some homeless groups, a *legally-enforceable right to 'suitable' temporary accommodation which lasts, in most cases, until 'settled' housing becomes available*. These rights were first established in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977²², subsequently re-enacted in the Housing Act 1985, then replaced with some modifications by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. Part 7 has also been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. While the relevant legal provisions are expressed as 'duties' on the local authority, rather than as 'rights' for homeless persons, from the outset the courts held that these obligations were clear and specific enough for homeless applicants to have 'title and interest' to challenge decisions under this legislation by legal action through the courts. Homeless applicants are now entitled to an internal review of most aspects of the decision on their application, and a statutory appeal to the county court (on a point of law) is also provided.

3.30 Strictly speaking, the relevant 'main' entitlement in England is to indefinite (suitable) temporary accommodation until (suitable) settled housing becomes available, found either by the household itself or by the local authority. However, in practice this settled housing is almost always secured by the local authority that owes a duty under the homelessness legislation²³. Most temporary accommodation for households accepted as homeless is provided in self-contained units through leasing arrangements with private landlords or in local authorities' own stock or housing association stock. There is also some limited use of bed and breakfast hotels and hostels for temporary accommodation, but the long-term use of bed and breakfast for families has been ended by recent legal changes²⁴.

²²The original 1977 Act covered all of Great Britain, but was then incorporated into separate legislation for England/ Wales (Housing Act 1985) and Scotland (Housing (Scotland) Act 1987). However, the basic framework remained very similar throughout Great Britain until the Housing Act 1996 (which affected England and Wales but not Scotland); and there has been further significant divergence since Scottish devolution, with the passing of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 by the Scottish Parliament. The homelessness legislation was extended to Northern Ireland in 1988.

²³In Scotland, the legislation provides that local authorities must secure 'permanent' accommodation for qualifying homeless households (see Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by Housing (Scotland) Act 2001).

²⁴Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 (SI 2003/3326).

- 3.31** In England (and elsewhere in the UK), some degree of assistance is available to people who fall within a broad definition of homelessness (including, for example, those with accommodation which they cannot ‘reasonably’ be expected to occupy). However, the main right (to be accommodated until settled housing becomes available) is restricted to specified categories of homeless people (ie the ‘priority need’ groups²⁵), who have not brought about their own homelessness (ie they are not ‘intentionally homeless’). Certain categories of persons from abroad are ineligible for help under the homelessness legislation (including asylum seekers²⁶), but EEA nationals (including those from the A8 member states) who are ‘workers’ (or treated as ‘workers’, in the case of A8 nationals during their first 12 months of employment), are self-employed, or are habitually resident and have some other right to reside, are eligible for statutory homelessness assistance²⁷. Non-EEA nationals are also eligible if they have been granted to leave to enter or remain in the UK with recourse to public funds.
- 3.32** There has for some years been an active debate underway in France about whether an enforceable right to housing should be established – potentially in-line with the ‘Scottish model’, whereby virtually all homeless people will have a right to permanent rehousing by 2012 (Fitzpatrick, 2004)²⁸. A vociferous protest campaign resulted in emergency legislation being passed in March 2007 aiming to establish a legally-enforceable right to housing. From January 2012, all social housing applicants who have experienced ‘an abnormally long delay’ in being allocated accommodation can apply to an administrative tribunal judge to demand that the state provide them with housing. There are also transitional arrangements in place which provide that social housing applicants in one of five ‘priority’ categories, including homeless people, can benefit from this legislation from December 2008. This legislation was passed very quickly and there are concerns that its vagueness in key areas may raise difficulties in implementation.
- 3.33** No other countries in the survey provided legally-enforceable rights of this nature, ie where their ultimate discharge involved making available ‘settled’ housing.

²⁵ The priority need groups are households containing any of the following: dependent children; a pregnant woman; young people aged 16/17 years old (or 18-20 years old if formerly in local authority care); and adults who are ‘vulnerable’ due to old age, disability, an institutional background, being a victim of violence, etc.

²⁶ See footnote 6 above.

²⁷ The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations. (SI 2006/1294).

²⁸ See the Housing Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003. The ‘Scottish model’ is attracting a great deal of attention amongst advocacy groups throughout Europe. More generally, FEANTSA – the European Federation of Organisations Working with the Homeless – has for many years been advocating a ‘right-based’ approach to addressing homelessness across the EU (Kenna, 2005).

Table 3.2 Enforceable Rights to Accommodation

| | Rights requiring settled accommodation to be made available for homeless people | Rights to emergency shelter/ accommodation for roofless people | Other accommodation rights/ associated rights for homeless people |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Australia | No – despite longstanding campaign to establish a right to accommodation for homeless people | No | No |
| Canada | No | No | No |
| US | No | Only in New York City | No |
| Germany | No | Yes | Yes – to support and advice for homeless people in ‘special social difficulties’ |
| France | Yes – from December 2008, for homeless people and other ‘priority groups’ who have experienced ‘an abnormally long delay’ in being allocated social housing | No | No |
| Netherlands | No | No | No |
| Sweden | No | Yes | Yes – those with severe disabilities entitled to place in a ‘group home’ |
| Spain | No | No | No |
| England | Yes – but only if eligible, in a priority need group, and not intentionally homeless | No – unless they are eligible, in a priority need group, and unintentionally homeless – see column 1 | Yes – all homeless people have a right to advice and assistance to help them secure accommodation |
| Czech Republic | No | No | No |
| Hungary | No | Yes | Yes – elderly and ill homeless people entitled to place in a ‘residential home’; homeless families entitled to a ‘temporary home’ |
| Poland | No | Yes | No |

Source: country experts, except England (own analysis)

Enforceable rights leading to settled housing for particular social groups

3.34 We also investigated whether legislation related to particular groups (such as children), rather than to homeless people per se, may represent, in effect, a legally protected route to settled housing not dissimilar to the ‘priority need’ categories in England. However, the only relevant provisions identified amongst the surveyed countries were in Sweden and Hungary:

- **In Sweden**, those with severe disabilities have an enforceable right to permanent accommodation: but what is offered is a group home rather than ‘regular’ housing. There is also an entitlement to housing for the elderly, but this was described by our country expert as ‘more an obligation for the municipality than a right for the old person’. In addition, while the ‘child perspective’ in social work services in Sweden ‘reinforces’ the obligation for municipalities to find housing for families with children threatened by homelessness, according to our country expert this still ‘does not constitute a right to housing’.
- **In Hungary**, there is a legal entitlement to permanent accommodation in ‘homeless residential homes’ for elderly and ill homeless people who need long-term care. Whilst in principle this is an enforceable right, supply is insufficient, and there are no instances of individuals trying to enforce these entitlements using legal procedures (though NGOs do use the existence of the rights to press for additional resources).

Enforceable rights to emergency shelter/accommodation

3.35 Legally-enforceable rights to emergency accommodation were more common than rights leading to settled accommodation, but these were still confined to a minority of countries, all of them in Europe:

- **In Germany**, municipalities have a legally-enforceable obligation (under police laws) to accommodate homeless persons who would otherwise be roofless. This accommodation normally takes the form of a (low-standard) bed space in a hostel or shelter for single people, or to a (low-standard) self-contained flat for families. There is no time-limit on eligibility.
- **In Sweden**, similarly, social services legislation oblige municipalities to ensure that nobody within their territory ‘suffers’ – this is interpreted to include an entitlement to ‘emergency accommodation’. However, the right to emergency shelter is conditional, and may be withdrawn if the client fails to meet certain obligations, such as attending planned meetings, keeping sober, seeking work, etc.²⁹
- **In Poland**, social welfare law obliges communes to offer help to homeless people, including shelter in hostels, refuges and other institutional settings. These are intended to be temporary arrangements, but can persist for prolonged periods because of difficulties in finding permanent dwellings.

²⁹ This very much parallels the Swedish system of ‘workfare’ whereby generous social security benefits are accompanied by requirements to enter training schemes or to gain work experience.

- **In Hungary** social welfare law obliges local municipalities to provide accommodation in night shelters, temporary shelters or rehabilitation institutions for people whose 'physical well-being is at risk' (though they can be excluded on behavioural grounds). Standards are very poor in the night/temporary shelters (where up to 15-20 people may share a room). The Hungarian child welfare system provides temporary homes for families to enable parents and children to stay together.
- 3.36** In the Netherlands, social welfare law specifies that emergency accommodation for homeless people should be provided by municipalities; a special grant is provided by central government to subsidise this. However, unlike in the countries noted above, these provisions do not appear to generate individual rights that courts would be willing to enforce.
- 3.37** With the exception of Hungary³⁰, country experts in the relevant European countries reported that all immigrants legally resident in their countries are entitled to emergency accommodation on the same basis as their own nationals. Thus no distinction is drawn between nationals from the A8 member states³¹, other EU or EEA nationals, or indeed legal immigrants from elsewhere.
- 3.38** Although there is no such federal right in the US, a single jurisdiction within it – New York City – provides a legally-enforceable right to accommodation in certain circumstances. New York's rights are based on consent agreements pursuant to court cases. Single men got the right to shelter that 'meets health and safety standards' in 1981; single women in 1983; and families in 1986. The entitlement usually amounts to a place in a shelter for single people and to a self-contained apartment (of a reasonable standard) for families. Two other cities in the US – Philadelphia and Washington DC – once had such ordinances but rescinded them. No other relevant rights have ever existed in the US.
- 3.39** In all of these cases, it is notable that the entitlement falls far short of the right to suitable temporary accommodation until suitable settled accommodation becomes available that applies in England. Furthermore, in all of the relevant countries, either the formal definition, or the nature of the duty, implies that 'homelessness' pretty much equates with the threat of rough sleeping. For example, in New York the entitlement applies to the 'truly homeless', who are defined as those who have absolutely nowhere else to go – a condition that is rigorously investigated over the several weeks it takes for an application to be processed. Perhaps because the rights are more limited, and homelessness defined much more narrowly than in England, the entitlement usually applies to all those accepted after investigation as homeless people (there are no priority groups), and there is no test of whether they are intentionally homeless.

³⁰ Non-Hungarian citizens must be nationals of countries which have signed the European Social Charter in order to use these shelters.

³¹ However, most EU-15 member states currently permit only restricted access to their labour markets to nationals of the A8 member states, meaning that few A8 nationals will have a right to reside within them.

3.40 While the Government in England provides a significant amount of support to help rough sleepers off the street and into a more stable situation (see below), it is worth noting that there are no legal rights to emergency accommodation for roofless people unless they are in a 'priority need group', are eligible for assistance, and have become homeless unintentionally. In this sense the *legal* safety net in England for this group is weaker than in the countries just discussed.

'Indirect' rights to accommodation and other assistance through social welfare legislation

3.41 In some countries 'indirect' rights to accommodation and other forms of assistance could be said to exist by virtue of public welfare legislation which stipulates that homelessness or related social ills are to be avoided, with local or regional authorities required to take action. Some of the emergency accommodation rights discussed above come into this category, but so too could wider forms of assistance. However, only two (additional) relevant examples were identified across the surveyed countries:

- In Germany, there is a legally-enforceable entitlement to support and advice for people in 'special social difficulties', amongst whom homeless people are the most important group. Relevant forms of assistance include counselling, support for training and employment, and help with access to housing and maintaining a tenancy (though not to housing itself).
- In Sweden, legal interpretation seems to have shifted on the (legally-enforceable) 'right to assistance' provided under social welfare legislation: housing was once considered a relevant type of 'assistance' in the 1980s, but this is no longer the case (though help with paying rent is still included). There is scope for local interpretation, and where there are children in the household it is more likely that some form of 'regular' housing will be secured.

State-funded homelessness programmes

3.42 The lack of legally-enforceable individual rights in most of the countries covered in the survey does not mean that there are no legal obligations or government programmes to assist homeless people. In fact, there is state-funded housing assistance available to homeless people to a greater or lesser degree across all of the surveyed countries³². These state-funded homelessness programmes very often have a statutory basis insofar as they are enabled or required by various forms of 'social welfare' legislation, but the relevant provisions are couched in such general terms as to be legally unenforceable by individual (non)recipients. The key features of these state-funded programmes are summarised in Table 3.3.

³² 'State-funded' is defined to include funding from central, regional or local government.

Table 3.3 State-funded Homelessness Assistance

| | National Homelessness Programme/ Funding Stream | Role of Municipalities | Principal Direct Providers | Reintegrative Services/ Emphasis | Preventative Services/ Emphasis |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Australia | Yes | Minor | NGOs | Yes | Yes – but in early stages |
| Canada | Yes | Enablers; co-funders | NGOs | Yes – but considered insufficient | Yes – but limited |
| US | Yes | Enablers; co-funders | NGOs | Yes | No |
| Germany | No – but there is a regional programme in North Rhine Westphalia only | Main funders; enablers; and direct providers of some services | NGOs (single people); municipalities (families) | Yes | Yes – strong emphasis and apparent success |
| France | Yes | Enablers | NGOs | Yes | Yes – but limited to prevention eviction |
| Netherlands | Yes | Enablers | NGOs | Yes – but recent; most services still basic | Yes – but recent |
| Sweden | Yes – but limited | Main funders; enablers; direct providers | Municipalities; some NGO involvement | Yes – but ‘staircase’ model is criticised | Not explicitly – but strong mainstream welfare state |

Table 3.3 State-funded Homelessness Assistance

| | National Homelessness Programme/ Funding Stream | Role of Municipalities | Principal Direct Providers | Reintegrative Services/ Emphasis | Preventative Services/ Emphasis |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|---|---|
| Spain | No | Minor – some municipalities provide basic services, but most provision is funded by Catholic Church and NGOs | Catholic Church and NGOs | No – basic services | No |
| England | Yes | Enablers; direct providers of accommodation and information, advice and assistance | Local authorities (temporary accommodation for priority need groups); NGOs (support services, accommodation for non-statutory groups) | Yes | Yes – recent strong emphasis and apparent success |
| Czech Republic | Yes | Minor – most grants direct from central government to NGOs; but some services funded directly by municipalities | NGOs for all centrally funded services; but municipalities fund and run some projects | No – mainly basic services; low levels of reintegration; but new services being developed | No |
| Hungary | Yes | Enablers; and direct providers | Municipalities; some NGO involvement | No – mainly basic services; low levels of reintegration; but new programmes being developed | No |
| Poland | Yes | Enablers; direct providers of some services | Municipalities; NGOs, churches, etc. | No – mainly basic services; low levels of reintegration; but new programmes being developed | No |

Source: country experts, except England (own analysis)

Who provides state-funded homelessness services?

3.43 Across the countries surveyed, the most common pattern of 'governance' is as follows:

- central/federal government establishes a national strategic and/or legal framework, and provides financial subsidies for homelessness services;
- municipalities are the key strategic players and 'enablers' of homelessness services; and
- direct provision is undertaken mainly by NGOs.

3.44 But there are significant variations, as now outlined.

English-speaking countries

3.45 There were major federal or national programmes on homelessness in all of the English-speaking countries surveyed:

- In Australia, the national programme on homelessness, framed by a national-level legal agreement, and funded by both federal and state governments, provides the great majority of homelessness services in the country. The service providers are generally NGOs, and only in some small communities is there any direct involvement of local government in service provision.
- The homeless service system in the US has grown massively since the early 1990s, largely because of federal leadership and funding following the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act 1987. There are now a range of major federal programmes on homelessness, administered at county level, but these federal monies are more than matched by state, local and private funding for homelessness services. Direct provision is mainly provided by NGOs, and as homelessness provision has expanded in recent years, more small providers have become involved.
- In Canada a major federal homelessness initiative, the 'National Homelessness Initiative', was launched in 1999, and this is due to be replaced by an 'enhanced' two-year federal programme, the 'Homelessness Partnering Strategy', in April 2007. However, responsibility for homelessness policies, services and funding is split between federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments. As elsewhere, there has been a shift from government as 'provider' to 'facilitator' of services, with a growing involvement of smaller, community-based organizations in delivery (Gaetz, 2006).

EU-15 countries

- 3.46** In England, local authorities are the key strategic players, with a statutory duty to produce strategies for preventing and tackling homelessness in their areas, as well as having responsibility for delivering the statutory homelessness assistance outlined above. The nationally-funded Housing Benefit system pays for most (though not all) of the cost of temporary accommodation provided to homeless people, while the national Supporting People programme provides funding for housing-related support. Local authorities also receive specific grants from central government to address rough sleeping, invest in prevention initiatives, upgrade hostel facilities, etc. As noted above, local authorities must secure temporary accommodation for those accepted as statutorily homeless – this is done mainly through leasing arrangements with private landlords or using their own or housing association stock. NGOs are the direct providers of the great majority of government-funded hostels and supported accommodation provision (mainly for non-statutorily homeless people), and most support services for homeless people are also contracted out to NGOs.
- 3.47** In France, emergency reception centres are generally operated by NGOs, with financial assistance from municipalities who receive a specific grant from central government for this purpose. Similarly, in the Netherlands almost all direct provision is by NGOs, again funded by central government via a grant to municipalities.
- 3.48** In contrast, German municipalities are the key funders as well as enablers of homelessness provision, with national government not involved to any significant degree (apart from setting the legislative frameworks and funding research). In Rhine-Westphalia only there is a regional state programme on homelessness. Professionalised NGOs have long been the main service providers for single homeless people in Germany, with their work almost entirely financed by state resources; but for families there is more direct provision by municipalities. Traditional NGOs in Germany are now facing a limited amount of competition from commercial organizations which provide specific accommodation and employment services to homeless people, and also from a new type of (less professionalised) voluntary sector organization which focuses on meeting basic needs, such as food, clothes, sleeping bags, etc. (in contrast to England where there has been a policy shift away from basic services like soup runs).
- 3.49** The position in Sweden is similar to that in Germany insofar as the municipalities are the main funders as well as enablers of homelessness services (central government co-funds some projects), and they directly provide most services (though NGOs run many shelters and provide support too). Also as in Germany, there is now some limited provision of services and accommodation by for-profit organisations.
- 3.50** In Spain the position is quite different to all of the countries reviewed above. There is no national programme on homelessness, and though some municipalities do fund homelessness services, only one-fifth of all provision is publicly-funded. Most services for homeless people are provided by the Catholic Church.

A8 Accession countries

3.51 There was a mixed picture across the central European countries with regards to the funding and delivery of homelessness services:

- **In Poland** the main responsibility lies with the municipalities, who receive a specific central government grant to subsidise basic homelessness services, but a wide range of actors – including NGOs, the Catholic church, etc. – are funded to play a role in delivery.
- **In Hungary** the key players are again the local municipalities, with the ‘compulsory’ emergency shelter services (see above) funded through central government grants. Hungarian municipalities directly provide about two-thirds of these compulsory services, with the remaining third contracted out to NGOs and church. With regards to the ‘discretionary’ services outlined below, there is probably a larger role for NGOs, but no statistics are kept on this.
- **In the Czech Republic**, the national government plays a very pro-active role, providing grants directly to NGOs (mainly large, religiously-based organizations). All centrally-funded services must be delivered by NGOs, but there are some non-centrally funded accommodation and other services operated directly by municipalities.

Who receives state-funded homelessness services?

3.52 This section reviews which particular types of homelessness, or groups within the homeless population, are targeted by discretionary state-funded programmes. It is important to remember that what we are concerned with here is *eligibility* and *prioritisation* rather than entitlement to homelessness services: these are ‘discretionary’ services, and even those eligible can be turned away if services are full. Moreover, the specialisms of providers who receive government funds often determine the actual pattern of provision for different groups in each country.

3.53 Whereas in relation to the emergency shelter entitlements discussed above homelessness tends to be defined fairly clearly (and restrictively), there are seldom such explicit definitions employed with regards to eligibility for discretionary homelessness programmes.

3.54 One exception is the US, where most government policy and access to government-supported assistance is based on the narrow definition of ‘literal homelessness’ outlined above. The key priority group are the ‘chronically homeless’ (with long-term homelessness histories and complex problems).

3.55 In Australia homelessness is also defined explicitly, but broadly, for the purposes of the main federal programme, as having inadequate access to safe and secure housing, which is further specified to include accommodation which is threatening to the health or safety of its occupants, or marginalises them. Anyone whose circumstances meet this definition is eligible for help, but the key groups targeted by service providers are young people, women escaping violence, and older single men.

There have been concerns about the consistent exclusion of particular groups from the Australian federal programmes (eg those with severe drug and alcohol problems), and this has been the subject of an Ombudsman inquiry in New South Wales.

- 3.56** Elsewhere there is far less precision on who is eligible for publicly-supported programmes, and in the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Czech Republic and France targeting and prioritising is left to the discretion of municipalities and/or NGOs and other delivery agents in the local area. In France, for example, there are only very general guidelines in the 'Besson law' that persons 'facing major/specific difficulties with housing because of lack of resources or because of life conditions' should be covered. Each area in France 'diagnoses' what the specific housing problems are for its 'underprivileged people', and the definition of who is targeted flows from that local analysis.
- 3.57** All this said, in many countries, especially in central Europe, it is clear that the underlying assumption is that homelessness equates to rough sleeping, and this focus is reflected in service provision in practice (see below).
- 3.58** As one might expect, given this general lack of precision, there are seldom any legal or other rules specifying the permitted access of A8 nationals, (other) EU or EEA nationals, or immigrants from elsewhere, to these services. Where there are any rules, they tend to simply specify that all those with permission to reside in the country may access discretionary homelessness services. However, in the Czech Republic all EU but not other EEA nationals are eligible for temporary accommodation. On the other hand, in France even 'paperless foreigners' (illegal immigrants) may be given emergency accommodation (though not social housing). This contrasts with the position in England where accommodation and other services receiving public funds cannot provide assistance to illegal immigrants (including failed asylum seekers) or to those who have been given leave to remain in the UK on condition that they make no recourse to public funds.

What is provided?

English-speaking countries

- 3.59** Both Australia and the US appear to have quite comprehensive and sophisticated programmes to help homeless people, with a clear emphasis on reintegration.
- 3.60** Thus the main aim of the national Australian programme is to provide transitional support in order to help homeless people achieve maximum independence. Normally assistance is provided in the form of short-term crisis accommodation, or a place in 'transitional' accommodation for up to 18 months. The programme also provides a broad range of support, including mediation, counselling and advocacy. However, there are capacity problems; on an average day in 2003-4, 53 per cent of those requesting immediate accommodation were turned away because the service was full (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005). In recent years there has been an increased focus on the prevention of homelessness, particularly recurrent homelessness, but it still seems to be early days on this.

3.61 In the US, the federal Supportive Housing Programme, and associated national and local initiatives, are intended to create a 'continuum of care' for homeless people by providing: emergency shelter; transitional housing; and 'permanent supportive housing'. In the mid-1990s, most applicants for these funds were big cities, but since then state governors have increasingly encouraged their smaller counties to get organised to access these federal resources. This process has made a major difference in expanding the continuum of care into smaller communities. By 2004, there were 235,000 transitional housing beds in the country (up from 160,000 in 1996, and virtually none in 1987), and 217,000 permanent supportive housing beds (up from 114,000 in 1996, and again virtually none in 1987). Since 1999, at least 30 per cent of funds under the Supportive Housing Programme have been devoted to 'permanent supportive housing' – indicating the priority to be given to 'permanent' solutions for people with long-term homelessness histories and 'disabilities'. Emergency shelter capacity also grew in the 1990s, as did emergency food services (soup kitchens and mobile food programmes).

3.62 A 'housing first' approach now drives the Presidentially-mandated 10-year plan to end 'chronic homelessness', spearheaded by the U.S Interagency Council on Homelessness. It is claimed that this 'housing first' strategy has been especially successful with those who have the most complex problems (and therefore make the greatest resource demands on emergency services):

'...even the most chronic, most severely mentally ill people can be brought off the streets and can live stable lives, if they are supplied with housing.' (Burt, 2001, p.5)

3.63 However, the focus in the US still appears overwhelmingly on those who are already homeless, rather than on prevention, and there are also concerns that the development of these specialist services have run parallel with cuts in mainstream benefits which have impacted very negatively on homeless people.

3.64 In Canada the federal *National Homelessness Initiative* was said to have concentrated on emergency needs and community capacity-building in its early years, but over time there has been an attempt to shift toward longer-term solutions. A range of targeted housing is now provided for homeless people, including (communal) emergency shelters; (supported) 'transitional housing'; and 'supportive housing' (long-term housing intended for people who cannot live independently in the community). It is a 'community-driven' approach in Canada, and concerns remain about the ad-hoc and uneven manner of homelessness provision. There is also felt to be an insufficient emphasis on prevention and reintegration – investment is still heavily concentrated on temporary shelters, and there is a shortage of supportive and transitional housing (Gaetz, 2006). Moreover, recent research has identified a range of barriers facing homeless people in accessing 'regular' social housing (Oriole Research & Connelly Consulting Services, 2005). The new federal *Homelessness Partnering Strategy*, with its 'housing first' approach and emphasis on improved coordination, should resolve some of these concerns.

EU-15 countries

3.65 The western European and Scandinavian countries generally offer 'reintegrative' services as well as emergency provision:

- **In Sweden** there is, in principle, a strong emphasis on reintegration, encapsulated in its concept of a 'staircase' of provision, with emergency shelters at the bottom; followed by the 'secondary' housing market (see Chapter 2); and the top step comprising 'regular' rental flats and home ownership. However, people are evicted from the lower steps of the staircase if they fail to conform to the behaviour expected of them (see above), and in any case only a small minority actually manage to 'climb all the stairs' to a dwelling of their own (Sahlin, 2005b).
- **In France**, alongside the short-term temporary accommodation provided in hotels and emergency reception centres, 'Centres for Emergency Reception and Social Re-Integration' (CHRSs) have been established which perform a much wider role, including the provision of work-related counselling and personal social support to assist people to move on to independent living. 'Very social' housing in France appears to perform a similar function to the 'secondary' housing market in Sweden, and it is rare for households to access this sector without having first gone through emergency provision. Homelessness prevention in France is mainly understood as preventing literal homelessness, (rough sleeping or emergency shelter use), and relates largely to the establishment of an emergency phone line for those at risk of sleeping rough and the provision of reasonable quality temporary accommodation. But there is also some attention paid to preventing eviction through the '*fonds de solidarité pour le logement*' (solidarity fund for housing), set up by the Besson law, which assists those in difficulties to pay their rent and utility bills.
- **In Germany**, the (poor quality) emergency accommodation provided under the police laws was discussed above, but the importance of reintegration into permanent housing is also recognized, and in some areas there is a good system of 'floating support' for ex-homeless people living in self-contained accommodation. In addition, there is now a great emphasis on prevention services (particularly eviction prevention) by NGOs and municipalities, which has demonstrably paid dividends, with the number of homeless families reduced to almost nil in some areas.
- **In England** there is a strong emphasis on reintegration, with discharge of the statutory homelessness duty ultimately leading, in most cases, to the offer of settled housing. The Supporting People programme (which is non-statutory) delivers assistance to help people sustain their accommodation. Also relevant here is a series of special initiatives established by central government to help rough sleepers to sustain lifestyles away from the streets. They have provided funding for outreach workers; hostel places; new housing association homes; resettlement services; and specialist support with drug, alcohol and mental health problems (Randall & Brown, 2002). There has been a recent step-

change in the emphasis given to homelessness prevention in England (including, for example, the provision of enhanced housing advice, family mediation, landlord liaison, etc.) and this has been linked to the reductions noted above in statutory homelessness (Pawson *et al.*, 2006). However, there are concerns in some quarters that this focus on preventative interventions could be in tension with the protection offered by the statutory safety net, through 'diverting' or 'deferring' formal homelessness applications (Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 2007; Pawson & Davidson, 2007).

3.66 The Netherlands stands out amongst the west European countries as having what seem to be pretty basic homelessness arrangements, consisting of night shelters, day care centres, hostels and boarding houses. The lack of national provisions on what form homelessness services should take, there are wide variations in the types of accommodation and other assistance (on finance, work, relationships, etc.) offered at local level. However, in the last few years there has been more emphasis on providing preventative support (especially for those under threat of eviction or leaving institutions) and help with 'reintegration and recovery'. The *Homelessness Action Plan*, launched by central government and the four major cities in 2006, is intended to address rooflessness in these cities, and to provide homeless people with 'individual pathway plans', including access to stable housing, regular income, healthcare and employment/meaningful activity (Wolf & Mensink, 2006). Other municipalities have been asked to prepare similar action plans for their areas in 2007.

3.67 As noted above, there is no national homelessness programme in Spain, but local schemes have been developed, and a survey conducted in 2003 found that there were 752 centres catering to the needs of homeless people across the country (Carbrera, 2006). Most of these services are provided by the Catholic Church or NGOs, but some municipalities, particularly in the large cities, fund provision for homeless people. In Barcelona, for example, the municipality provides temporary winter shelter and day services for homeless adults at 'social risk'.

A8 Accession countries

3.68 Among the central European countries, provision is far more basic and crisis-focused than in western Europe, but things do seem to be changing:

- In Hungary, there has been a rapid expansion of homelessness services over the past 15 years or so, and a national strategy on homelessness is now being developed by central government. A series of pilot projects have been funded which seek to reintegrate homeless people, and a new programme aims to make available 900 additional 'move-on' rental units where homeless people can stay for up to one year with (gradually decreasing) support.
- On a much larger scale, the Polish Government has launched a programme to provide 100,000 new social rented flats and 20,000 new places in temporary facilities for a range of groups, including the 'permanently homeless', as well as refugees, people leaving institutions, those fleeing domestic violence, etc.

It was reported that, in practice, homeless people are able to gain access to temporary accommodation in Poland, but securing permanent social housing is far more difficult.

- New social services legislation in the Czech Republic specifies a range of provision to be made available to homeless people, supported by funding from central government. This provision includes day centres; night shelters; 'asylum housing' (with a reintegrative function, helping clients find work and mainstream housing); and half-way houses (aimed mainly at people leaving institutions). In addition, municipalities and NGOs operate 'lodging houses' (hostels), without central government funds. There is excess demand for temporary accommodation in Prague, especially in winter, but elsewhere supply is said to be sufficient.

3.69 As with the 'compulsory' temporary accommodation in Poland and Hungary described above, standards in homeless accommodation in the Czech Republic are very basic: shared rooms are the norm, institutions are often large. In the Czech Republic and Hungary there seems to be something similar to the Swedish 'staircase' approach, with all homeless people expected to spend a period in night shelters and other very basic forms of accommodation, and only after a period of '*active cooperation with social workers*' may they be considered for 'better' forms of accommodation, such as a lodging house. The rate of move-on to permanent housing was reported to be extremely low across all of the central European countries.

Strengths and weaknesses of systems of homelessness assistance

3.70 This section summarises the authors' interpretation of the strengths and weaknesses of the system of homelessness assistance in the countries surveyed³³. Most of the strengths identified were in English-speaking or West European countries.

English-speaking countries

3.71 The Australian national programme seems to have considerable strengths: it is relatively comprehensive in the types of support that it offers; it is based on a sophisticated understanding of homelessness; and is backed up with regular, rigorous data on the scale of the problem. However, there are capacity concerns.

3.72 In the US, the 'housing first' approach has much to commend it, particularly in avoiding the potentially stigmatising and segregating effects of 'staircase' type models. The scale of the specialist programmes in the US is also impressive, but has to be seen in the context of the massive size of the problem they face; indeed, one could view the necessity for such a large specialised programme as itself an indication of the acute weakness of the mainstream safety net.

³³ While the authors drew upon the comments of the country experts in reflecting upon these strengths and weaknesses, the views expressed are those of the authors and should not be assumed to necessarily match those of the country experts. The same is true for the 'strengths and weaknesses' sections in Appendix 1.

3.73 In Canada, it is acknowledged that better coordination between the three levels of government charged with homelessness responsibilities is required. The new federal programme (see above) should bring about improvements in the strategic coherence of Canada's attempts to tackle homelessness.

EU-15 countries

3.74 The German emphasis on prevention services, and their evident success, stands out as a key strength amongst the west European countries. On the other hand, our country expert there felt that there was scope for more targeted measures on rough sleeping, and also that the lack of a general obligation to develop homelessness strategies was a weakness³⁴. New instruments for improving the access of marginalized groups to permanent housing are also said to be needed (some NGOs are attempting to address this).

3.75 As with Sweden's 'secondary' housing market, there is a concern that 'very social' housing in France is a means of segregating homeless and other 'challenging' groups from the mainstream social housing sector. It will be interesting to review the impact of the new statutory 'right to housing' on these arrangements. The relatively strong legal protection that the Swedish system offers some homeless people may be considered a strength, but the degree of surveillance and social control involved in managing the behaviour of those accommodated both in shelters and the 'secondary' housing market would probably be considered unacceptable in England. It is difficult to identify any strengths in the Spanish approach, and the weakness clearly lies in the limited public protection for homeless people.

3.76 The strong legal protection offered to homeless people who fall within a priority need group is a unique strength of the system of homelessness assistance in England, and the sustained efforts to address rough sleeping have clearly met with significant success. More recently, the increased focus on preventative approaches seems to have made a positive contribution to reduced levels of homelessness in England (Pawson *et al.*, 2006), though there are concerns regarding the interrelationship with the statutory safety net as noted above (Pawson & Davidson, 2007).

A8 Accession countries

3.77 It is easier to identify weaknesses than strengths in the central European forms of provision – the emphasis on crisis/emergency measures; the poor quality of temporary accommodation provided; the low rates of successful reintegration; and the absence of any significant emphasis on prevention. However, these limitations must be viewed in the context of just how recently homelessness problems and services have emerged in this part of Europe, and all three countries surveyed seemed to be making significant progress in developing more strategic and integrated responses. The poor availability of 'move-on' permanent social housing will, however, remain a major obstacle to implementation.

³⁴ Despite the emphasis on rooflessness in the emergency legal provisions noted above, in practice there is little data or services that focus on this specific group.

Conclusions

3.78 This chapter has reviewed the nature of homelessness and provision for homeless people across the 11 surveyed countries (in addition to England). The main findings are:

- The only countries with reasonably credible data on the scale of 'homelessness' (as they define it) are the US, Australia, France, Spain, Sweden and (parts of) Germany, along with England. But there are significant limitations of all these data sets, and none are directly comparable because they measure different things over different time scales. Many countries use a definition for research and enumeration purposes close to that of the US 'literal homelessness' – sleeping rough or staying in emergency/transitional homeless accommodation – but all definitions vary in specific respects.
- Only in Germany and England has there been a reported decline in levels of homelessness. Elsewhere increasing levels of homelessness are reported (Sweden, the Pomerania region of Poland), there is broad stability in numbers (Australia), or the trend data is inconclusive (eg US). Most countries which lack trend data nevertheless report a consensus that it is on the rise (for example, Canada, Czech Republic and Hungary).
- The structural factor usually said to be driving homelessness is a shortage of affordable rented accommodation, though in Germany and Sweden there is a greater emphasis on access than on supply. In the US and Canada, this was accompanied by a concern about the weak welfare protection for poor groups, while in the central European countries and France the impact of unemployment was cited.
- The main 'immediate causes' of homelessness in most countries appear to be relationship breakdown or eviction (mainly due to rent arrears). However, in certain countries emphasis was also placed on institutional backgrounds, drug, alcohol, or mental health problems, or other personal vulnerabilities.
- In all countries surveyed (except England) enumerated homeless households are overwhelmingly comprised of unemployed single men, often in their middle years (though the numbers of single women is increasing in some places). The proportion of families varies between countries, partly according to how much priority is given to meeting their needs. In many countries new immigrants, ethnic minorities and/or Indigenous peoples are over-represented (most notably Spain, France, Canada, US and Australia).
- England is highly unusual in providing, for priority need homeless groups, a legally-enforceable right to 'suitable' temporary accommodation which lasts, in most cases, until 'settled' housing becomes available. Legislation has, however, recently been passed by the French Parliament which attempts to establish a legally-enforceable right to housing for homeless people and other groups who have experienced 'an abnormally long delay' in being allocated

social housing. This legislation was passed very quickly and there are concerns that its vagueness in key areas may raise difficulties in implementation.

- Legally-enforceable rights to emergency accommodation are more common than rights to settled housing, but these are still confined to a minority of countries, all of them in Europe. Immigrants who are legally resident in these countries are generally entitled to emergency accommodation on the same basis as national citizens. A single jurisdiction within the US – New York City – also provides a legally-enforceable right to accommodation in certain circumstances.
- In a number of European countries, including Spain and Sweden, there is a 'right' to housing contained in the constitution, but no legal mechanisms are provided to enable homeless individuals to enforce these rights.
- Western European countries generally offer reintegrative services as well as emergency provision, though the 'staircase' model upon which this is sometimes based came in for criticism. All of the English-speaking countries have major, often sophisticated, federal or national programmes on homelessness, but in the US at least this was compensating for a very weak mainstream safety net. Among the central European countries, homelessness provision is far more basic and crisis-focused, but things do seem to be changing, with rapidly expanding provision and the development of more strategic approaches.
- The English-speaking and western European countries provide the key examples of strengths in terms of the system of assistance for homeless people. In particular, the emphasis on prevention in Germany, and now in England, is a significant positive measure which appear to be paying dividends with regards to the reduced incidence of homelessness.
- Elsewhere, it was difficult to discern positive outcomes for homeless people³⁵, though the low rates of reintegration into mainstream housing reported in a number of countries (including Sweden and the three central European countries) is indicative of negative outcomes for many. As noted above, there is evidence from a five-year longitudinal study in New York City that the provision of subsidized housing is by far the most successful intervention in promoting long-term residential stability amongst formerly homeless families (Shinn *et al.*, 1998).

³⁵We did not ask country experts to supply data on outcomes for homeless people. It is highly unlikely that most countries would have been able to make available robust data on the outcomes of their state-funded interventions.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

- 4.1** This report has reviewed the evidence surrounding the extent, causes and responses to homelessness in 11 countries (in addition to England). It has also examined the role that the social rented sector plays in these countries, especially with regard to low income and other vulnerable groups.
- 4.2** While the homelessness data reviewed in this project is not systematically comparable, it is suggestive of a link between weak welfare states, low levels of affordable housing and high levels of homelessness. Conversely, in countries with much stronger welfare states and significant affordable housing, the level of homelessness seems to be lower. Countries with large homeless populations are likely to have relatively high proportions of homeless people whose primary need is for affordable housing; while the proportionate prevalence of support needs seems to be greater in countries with comparatively low levels of homelessness. The US and Sweden are exemplars of these two positions.
- 4.3** In all of the surveyed countries, with the exception of England, single unemployed men (especially immigrants and ethnic minorities) dominate the enumerated homeless population (albeit that the proportion of single women and families is rising in some places). This may reflect the lower level of protection offered to single men than to families by welfare and housing systems – it is also likely to relate to the tendency for data in these countries to focus on the most extreme forms of homelessness, such as rough sleeping and use of emergency shelters. Certainly, England contrasts with most other countries in that the majority of households recorded in the published homelessness statistics as owed the main homelessness duty contain dependant children or a pregnant woman: this reflects the combination of a wide statutory definition of homelessness in England (families and pregnant women tend not to sleep rough), and that specific priority for assistance is given to families (among others) under the homelessness legislation, as well as the fact that the statutory homelessness system is part of the mainstream welfare state (unlike homelessness provision in other countries).
- 4.4** We identified evidence of strong demand for social rented housing in all of the countries surveyed and this reflects in large part high levels of housing need. However, the role that social rented housing plays in providing affordable housing to households that would otherwise have difficulty in accessing housing on the open market relates to the rules governing eligibility and access, as well as to the sector's overall size. In many European countries – including Sweden, France, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland – the poorest households are often excluded from the mainstream social rented sector. Instead they may be housed in cheaper, lower quality social housing with inferior security of tenure. In principle, this housing can form part of a 'staircase' by which homeless or other vulnerable households can access mainstream social housing, or a safety net which prevents tenants of the mainstream social rented sector from becoming homeless. However, in practice it can also slow down, or even block, homeless people from access to mainstream social housing, and so hinder reintegration.

- 4.5** A key benefit of the English (and wider UK) housing framework – that is, the homelessness legislation, and the rules relating to eligibility and ‘reasonable preference’ for an allocation of social housing by local authorities – is that it ensures that the poorest and most vulnerable households are not excluded from the mainstream social rented sector. The downside to this approach is that while it produces relatively good housing outcomes for low income households, it comes at the cost of spatial concentration, arising from the tendency of social rented housing to be geographically concentrated.
- 4.6** Similar problems are encountered in the (much smaller) social rented sectors in the other English-speaking countries, which have produced a variety of responses, ranging from the extreme approach of destroying the worst public housing estates and dispersing the population in the US, to spot purchases of properties in the open market and the use of neighbourhood regeneration to establish mixed income estates. Spatial concentration is also a feature of the Swedish system, though it takes the form of intra-tenure polarisation, and there is clearly a tendency in some countries to use the aim of income mixing to exclude low income households. However, the problem is hardest to tackle in the countries, including England, with high levels of poverty and inequality.

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Annex 1: Country profiles

Australia

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

| | |
|---|--|
| Size and trend of social rented sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.9 per cent (2001 census) • Declining absolutely and relatively |
| Landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHAs (84.5%) • State & community housing for indigenous people (8.5%) • Various NGOs (7%) |
| Demand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High – 200,000 applications for public housing pending in 2005 • Declining waiting lists reflect tight eligibility and long waits • Some low demand in former industrial areas, but no geographical problem of low demand on scale of parts of UK |
| Security of Tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • But recently two states have introduced fixed term tenancies for new tenants where renewal will be subject to ongoing eligibility tests after each term (2-10 years depending on life stage) expires • Some states use probationary tenancies for some new tenants |

ELIGIBILITY

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Who determines eligibility? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determined at state level |
| Means-tested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: introduced in 1970s |
| Minimum income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: 'independent income test' (ie cannot be allocated without a source of income) |
| Minimum age | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally 18 • Exceptionally may be 16-18 (eg lone parent) |
| Limits on size | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, property matched to household size, household composition and any special needs |
| Excluded groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| Exclusions: behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies by state, eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – arrears – criminal behaviour |

Australia *continued*

Immigrants

- Eligible if are permanent resident or refugees
- Ineligible if applying for or hold a temporary protection visa, or are a sponsored migrant (but may receive temporary/emergence accommodation or be housed as part of another eligible household)

ALLOCATIONS

Who determines policies?

- For PHAs the eight state/territorial governments

Criteria

- Varies between states
- Generally time + need with increasing weight given to the latter
- Allocations in high need areas may also be restricted for non-local applicants

Income mixing

- Only a few attempts, such as to avoid concentrations of some groups, eg gangs, teenagers, people with mental health problems
- Main strategies: sales and redevelopment of public estates and spot purchase on the open market
- Targeting outweighs these strategies

Vulnerable groups

- Allocations to social rented housing increasingly targeted on special needs groups
- For excluded vulnerable households some specialist community organisations may offer housing – or go to SAAP sector
- Many end up in insecure accommodation: caravan parks, boarding houses, sofa surfing; or become rough sleepers

HOMELESSNESS

Dominant definition of homelessness

For service provision purposes, homelessness is broadly defined as having '*inadequate access to safe and secure housing*'. A relatively wide definition is also used in surveys, which includes:

- people staying temporarily with friends/relatives
- those living in low quality 'lodging houses'
- those in emergency/temporary homeless accommodation
- those sleeping rough

Australia *continued*

Estimated scale and trends

- The scale of homelessness is estimated every 5 years. The latest estimate (in 2001), identified 99,000 homeless people:
 - representing 0.5 of the total population
 - around 14 per cent of those enumerated as homeless were sleeping rough
- The number of homeless people was fairly stable between 1996 and 2001. A new estimate (for 2006) will be available in 2007/8

Profile of homeless population

- The Indigenous population is overrepresented – although only 2 per cent of Australia's population identify as Indigenous, over 16 per cent of people receiving homelessness services were Indigenous in 2003/4

Causes

- Diverse causes of initial episode of homelessness, but the main cause of recurring homelessness is said to be a lack of permanent affordable housing

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- There is no legal right to accommodation for homeless people, though there has been a longstanding campaign to establish such a right

STATE (GOVERNMENT)-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – there is a major national programme (funded by both federal and state governments) which pays for most homelessness provision
- *Who provides?* – most direct provision is by not-for-profit organisations; only in some small communities is there any direct provision by local authorities
- *Who receives?* – anyone without 'safe and secure housing' is eligible, but the key groups targeted by service providers are young people; women escaping violence; and older single men
- *What is provided?* The emphasis is on transitional support to help homeless people achieve maximum independence. Two main forms of accommodation:
 - short-term crisis accommodation
 - 'transitional accommodation, for up to 18 months (with a broad range of support)

Australia *continued***Strengths and weaknesses**

- *Strengths* – relatively broad definition of homelessness; national legal agreement framing provision; regular, rigorous estimates of homeless population; emphasis on reintegration; some attention to prevention
- *Weaknesses* – absence of legal entitlements; incomplete coverage/capacity problems; concerns about consistent exclusion of some groups by homelessness services (eg people severely affected by drugs, alcohol or mental illness; those who decline to enter ‘case management’; those with challenging or violent behaviour; heavily pregnant women; disabled people); declining longer-term affordable housing options

Canada

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

Size and trend of social rented sector

- 6 per cent
- Stable

Landlords

- PHAs (agencies of Provincial governments, except Ontario)
- Also: NFPs, co-ops, etc
- Private landlords can receive rent supplements under 'social' housing programme

Demand

- 14 per cent households in Core Housing Need (repair, overcrowding, affordability) in 2001

Security of Tenure

- Yes, but may be asked to leave if income rises above threshold

ELIGIBILITY

Who determines eligibility?

- Provincial and local governments
- Also determined by funder (eg target group in programme) and groups that the provider is mandated to assist

Means-tested

- Yes (in most but not all Provinces)
- Some Provinces also apply asset test

Minimum income

–

Minimum age

- Usually 16-18

Limits on size

- Yes – property matched to household size; rules set by each Province

Excluded groups

- None – but some projects targeted on particular groups
- Those requiring support to maintain tenancy

Exclusions: behaviour

- Previous rent arrears
- Anti-social behaviour

Immigrants

- Applicant must be a permanent legal resident or a refugee
- Refugees may have a priority status

ALLOCATIONS

Who determines policies?

- Provincial and local governments
- Landlords

Criteria

- Varies: chronological, points, modified chronological (ie mostly chronological, but with quota for special needs), priority placement (as with modified chronological, except no quota)

Canada *continued*

- Income mixing**
- Some developments mixed with market rental units
 - Rent supplements paid to private landlords for social housing assists mixing
 - NFPs and co-ops more likely to income mix than PHAs

- Vulnerable groups**
- Social allocations increasingly targeted on people with support needs
 - For excluded vulnerable households supportive ('alternative') landlords have mandates to house vulnerable ('hard to house') groups, eg mentally ill
 - Some temporary shelters/ transitional housing accept tenants with drinks/drugs problems
 - Bottom end of private rented housing is housing of last resort

HOMELESSNESS

- Dominant definition of homelessness**
- The official definition, derived from the main federal homelessness programme, is: *'Any household that has no fixed address or security of housing tenure'*
 - Homelessness estimates are derived from both street counts of rough sleepers and shelter use counts (methods vary between cities)

- Estimated scale and trends**
- It is estimated that a minimum of 150,000 people use homeless shelters in Canada each year (0.5 per cent of population)
 - Trend data from particular cities (eg Calgary) indicate that scale is increasing

- Profile of homeless population**
- Most homeless people are men, but the fastest growing groups are families, women and young people
 - A significant proportion of recent (within past 5 years) immigrants to Canada, especially refugees, experience homelessness
 - Aboriginal people are overrepresented

- Causes**
- Amongst the key causes are:
- a shortage of affordable housing
 - cutbacks in social programmes, especially income support programmes
 - deinstitutionalisation policies with inadequate investment in community-based services

- RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION**
- No rights to accommodation

Canada *continued*

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – responsibility for homelessness funding, policies and services is split between federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments. There is a federal 'National Homelessness Initiative', to be replaced by an enhanced 'Homelessness Partnering Strategy' in April 2007
- *Who provides?* – direct provision is mainly by NGOs, with a growing involvement of smaller, community-based organisations
- *Who receives?* – in this 'community-driven' approach, targeting is left to the local discretion of municipalities, NGOs and other delivery agents. Special provision is made for Aboriginal people
- *What is provided?*
 - emergency shelters (communal shelters for tenures of up to 6 months)
 - 'transitional' housing (with support, tenures up to 3 years)
 - 'supportive housing' (long-term accommodation for those who cannot live independently)

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – the range of targeted housing; an updated federal programme; some attention to prevention.
- *Weaknesses* – difficulties of coordination between different tiers of government (the new federal programme is intended to address this); ad hoc and patchy nature of provision in some areas; shortage of transitional and supportive housing

US

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

| | |
|---|---|
| Size and trend of social rented sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.2 per cent |
| Landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHAs (31%) • Private not-for-profit and for-profit landlords and developers (69%) |
| Demand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHAs with waiting lists: 8-10 years • Worst Case Housing Needs (renters with very low income or in substandard housing): 4.9 per cent households 2005 |
| Security of Tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, but may be lost if income rises above eligibility threshold, or law governing subsidies changes • Sometimes 'cleaning up' policies lead to eviction, eg felony drug convictions |

ELIGIBILITY

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Who determines eligibility? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing & Urban Development (HUD) – the federal department sets rules for projects it funds • Otherwise, rules set locally, subject to HUD criteria |
| Means-tested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes |
| Minimum income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No |
| Minimum age | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 (to sign a lease) |
| Limits on size | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None |
| Excluded groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility for many programmes is very tightly specified |
| Exclusions: behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable groups will have difficulty accessing housing • Felony drug conviction of anyone in the households |
| Immigrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible if lawful immigrant or refugee |

ALLOCATIONS

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Who determines policies? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities |
| Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually date order |

US continued

- Income mixing**
- Not a HUD priority: HOPEVI pays for demolition of public housing and its replacement with mixed income housing
 - Proportions often specified in new subsidy programmes

- Vulnerable groups**
- Once homeless, may get help, eg caseworkers work with landlords who may claim from fund for damage
 - Other programmes help individuals to re-establish credit records
 - Some programmes provide supported housing for people with serious mental illnesses

HOMELESSNESS

- Dominant definition of homelessness**
- 'Literal homelessness', that is:*
- people staying in emergency shelter or transitional housing programmes; or
 - rough sleeping

- Estimated scale and trends**
- Annual prevalence – estimated to be 1 per cent of population (2.5-3.5 million people)
 - 'Point-in-time' ('stock') estimate – 730,000 homeless on an average night in 2005 (29 per cent of whom were sleeping rough)
 - There have been a series of point-in-time estimates (in 1987, 1996 and 2005), but they differ in statistical precision, and it is unclear whether the scale of homelessness is increasing or decreasing

- Profile of homeless population**
- On any given day:
- the majority of identified homeless households are single men
 - around one sixth are families with children
 - a disproportionate number (around two-fifths) are African American

- Causes**
- Mainly structural, particularly:
- lack of affordable housing
 - poor educational and employment opportunities especially in most deprived cities
 - weak welfare protection

- RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION**
- No federal rights
 - In New York City only, there is a legally-enforceable right to shelter for both single people and families who have absolutely nowhere else to go

US continued**STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE**

- *Who funds?* – There are major federal funding programmes (including the ‘Supportive Housing Programme’), administered at county level. This federal funding is more than matched by state, local and private funding for homelessness services
- *Who provides?* – the service providers are mainly NGOs
- *Who receives?* – all those defined as ‘literally homeless’ are eligible, but supply does not always meet demand. Key priority is the ‘chronically homeless’ – with long-term homelessness histories and disabilities
- *What is provided?* – most communities try to provide a ‘continuum of care’, including emergency shelter; transitional housing; and ‘permanent supportive housing’, and to promote more affordable housing. Separate federal programmes also fund emergency food and shelter services, eviction prevention, etc

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – the scale, sophistication and rapid growth of the specialist homelessness programmes (though the necessity for this could be considered a weakness)
- *Weaknesses* – the limited mainstream welfare system leaves a large proportion of the poor population vulnerable to homelessness; a lack of focus on prevention

Germany

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

- Size and trend of social rented sector**
- 7 per cent stock (W. Germany 2003)
 - Declining absolutely and relatively – Peaked at 19 per cent in 1968; 15 per cent 1987
- Landlords**
- MHCs (no more than 18% per cent of social stock)
 - Also: various companies – private, employers, employees
- Demand**
- General relaxation in housing market in 1990s
 - Shortages in high demand areas
 - 1 million empty dwelling in former East Germany
- Security of Tenure**
- High security of tenure. Unlimited tenancies are the rule; time limits exceptional

ELIGIBILITY

- Who determines eligibility?**
- General rules set by federal government, but state governments may amend
- Means-tested**
- Yes, but these vary between states
 - Savings not taken into account – but interest is
 - In 2000 39 per cent population qualified
 - If income rises, may be liable to pay rent supplement
- Minimum income**
- No
- Minimum age**
- 18, but in some places higher for singles
- Limits on size**
- Determined by states
- Excluded groups**
- Generally, no
 - Some local authorities (esp. high demand) have residence qualification
- Exclusions: behaviour**
- Most states allow local authorities to reject applications on grounds of unacceptable behaviour
 - Most local authorities sign up to services that provide information on indebtedness
 - Most do not accept people evicted for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour
- Immigrants**
- EU-15 and EEA: eligible
 - A8 (until April 2009): only if granted residence permit (eg scarce skills)
 - Outside EU: if have residence permit > 1 year (includes guestworkers and refugees)

Germany *continued*

ALLOCATIONS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Who determines policies? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual landlords • Some local authorities retain nomination rights (though landlords can choose say one from three nominees) • A few local authorities retain direct nomination rights (only one candidate offered to landlord) |
| Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points, urgency, date order • Often transfers get priority |
| Income mixing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various practices adopted, eg shifting allocation rights on subsidised housing to non-subsidised housing owned by same landlord, exempting part of stock from social obligations • Practices becoming less effective as social rented sector is shrinking – may sometimes exclude poor |
| Vulnerable groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly excluded from social rented sector • Growth in NGOs (especially in large cities) since late 1980s which secure properties and sub-let them to households with support needs • Often end up in sub-standard private rented or temporary accommodation provided by local authority |

HOMELESSNESS

| | |
|--|---|
| Dominant definition of homelessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main legal provisions (especially for securing temporary accommodation, see below) define homelessness as having nowhere at all to live • The definitions used in surveys/research are generally broader |
| Estimated scale and trends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness has been falling: (rough) national annual prevalence estimates indicate a drop from 590,000 people in 1996/97 to 310,000 in 2003; more robust regional data (from North-Rhine Westphalia) confirms a downward trend • But some signs of increase in specific areas (eg the prosperous cities of southern Germany) |
| Profile of homeless population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority are single people (mainly men) • The proportion of families with children has been dropping |
| Causes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing market conditions are key to homelessness trends; access to housing, as well as supply, is a concern • Eviction due to rent arrears is the most important 'immediate' cause • Amongst single people, relationship breakdown, exclusion by parents, bereavement, and leaving prison are key triggers |

Germany *continued*

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- Police laws oblige municipalities to provide homeless people, who would otherwise be roofless, with 'temporary' accommodation. There is no time limit on occupation. These provisions are legally enforceable. All non-German citizens, so long as they are legally entitled to be resident in Germany, should be treated on the same basis as German citizens
- For single people, the accommodation provided is usually in a hostel or shelter; for families a self-contained flat is normally (though not always) made available
- There are also legally-enforceable rights to support and advice for people in 'special social difficulties', with homeless people the key group targeted

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – German municipalities are the main funders as well as 'enablers' of homelessness services. In Rhine-Westphalia only, there is a regional homelessness programme
- *Who provides?* – NGOs provide most services to single homeless people; there is more direct provision by municipalities for homeless families. There is now some (small scale) specialist provision by for-profit organisations
- *Who receives?* – policy interventions prioritise families, but there is also provision for single people. Decisions on eligibility and targeting are left to municipalities (so long as the legal entitlements noted above are fulfilled)
- *What is provided?* The emergency accommodation provided under the police laws (see above) tends to be of poor quality. But many municipalities also provide good quality 'reintegrative' services, including floating support for those in self-contained accommodation. There is now a heavy emphasis on prevention services (particularly eviction prevention)

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – the prevention services appear to have been highly successful, and have made a major contribution to the decline in homelessness
- *Weaknesses* – lack of targeted measures on rough sleeping; declining access to permanent accommodation for marginalised groups (though various NGO projects are attempting to counter this); no duty to develop a homelessness strategy

England

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

Size and trend of social/public rented sector

- 18 per cent
- Absolute and relative decline

Landlords

- Local authorities (54%)
- Housing associations (46%)

Demand

- Generally excess demand, but areas of low demand

Security of Tenure

- Yes, but full security may be delayed by use of introductory tenancies for new tenants and landlords may apply for demotion orders in cases of anti-social behaviour

ELIGIBILITY Note that eligibility under the homelessness legislation is covered in a separate table (see below)

Who determines eligibility?

- Determined by primary legislation and regulations. Legislation limits local authority discretion over eligibility to those guilty of 'serious unacceptable behaviour', eg previous anti-social behaviour or serious rent arrears

Means-tested

- No, but LAs can take income and other resources into account in determining priorities

Minimum income

- No, but LAs can take income into account in determining priorities

Minimum age

- No, but in practice local authorities may restrict to over 18s

Limits on size

- No, although in practice will restrict eligibility for particular properties

Excluded groups

- Various categories of persons from abroad

Exclusions: behaviour

- Local authorities may exclude those who are guilty of 'serious unacceptable behaviour'

Immigrants

- Eligible, if EEA national who is 'worker' or self-employed, or has certain other rights to reside and is habitually resident (but if from new eastern European accession states eligibility on basis of being a 'worker' is lost if stop working within first 12 months of continuous employment)
- Eligible, if non-EEA national and has refugee status or other leave with recourse to public funds
- Not eligible, if asylum seeker or has other leave to enter or remain on condition of no recourse to public funds

England *continued*

ALLOCATIONS

Who determines policies?

- Landlord within legal and regulatory framework

Criteria

- Local authorities are obliged to give reasonable preference to specified groups, including homeless people
- Preference is determined by mix of need (for which points may be awarded) and time waited
- Some local authorities operate 'banded' systems where different categories of need are given degrees of priority, but time waited determines priority within each band
- Government policy has set a target of 2010 for all local authorities to establish choice-based lettings

Income mixing

- Mixed Communities Initiative aims at area renewal partly through developing approaches to income and tenure mixing
- Housing Market Renewal through demolition of low demand housing in all tenures and replacement with housing for sale
- Use of planning guidance and agreements to ensure income mixing in new developments

Vulnerable groups

- The allocations legal framework creates a tendency for vulnerable groups to be prioritised for social rented sector, but there is specific provision to exclude on grounds of 'serious unacceptable behaviour'

HOMELESSNESS

Dominant definition of homelessness

- Research tends to focus on either:
- 'statutory homelessness' (a relatively wide definition based on whether a person has a home available), but this is often narrowed by the 'priority need' criterion (which determines entitlement to assistance) and which largely includes households that include children, a pregnant woman or a 'vulnerable' adult; or
 - 'single homelessness' (rough sleeping and staying in hostels and other temporary/emergency accommodation)

England *continued*

Estimated scale and trends

- There were 76,860 households accepted as statutorily homeless and in priority need in 2006 – a fall of 43 per cent since 2003
- As at 31 December 2006, there were 89,510 households in temporary accommodation. Again, this number has been falling
- Street counts indicate a fall of two thirds in the number sleeping rough since 1998

Profile of homeless population

- The majority of households secured accommodation under the homelessness legislation are families with dependent children (mainly led by lone mothers) or households containing a pregnant woman
- The 'single homeless' population comprises mainly single men (though amongst young homeless people the number of young women and young men is more even)

Causes

- The overriding concern is a shortage of affordable housing, particularly in London and the South
- There is also acknowledgement of support needs related to issues such as drug, alcohol and mental health problems, particularly amongst single homeless people, and especially those who sleep rough

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- Households which are 'homeless', 'eligible' and in 'priority need', and who have not brought about their own homelessness, are entitled to be accommodated until 'suitable' settled housing becomes available (see below). This is a legally-enforceable right
- Households which are homeless 'intentionally' are entitled to 'suitable' temporary accommodation (typically for 28 days) if they are in a priority need group and eligible. This is a legally-enforceable right

England *continued*

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – mainly central government
- *Who provides?* – local authorities secure temporary accommodation for priority need statutorily homeless households (through leasing arrangements with private landlords or in their own or housing association stock), and provide advice and assistance to all homeless households. In most cases, they also provide the settled accommodation that brings the homelessness duty to an end. NGOs run most hostels and supported accommodation (mainly for non-statutorily homeless people) and provide most support services
- *Who receives?*
 - the statutory definition of ‘homelessness’ is relatively wide and includes those without any accommodation in which they can live with their families, and also those who cannot gain access to their accommodation, or cannot reasonably be expected to live in it. However, only ‘priority need’ homeless groups (broadly, families with dependant children and ‘vulnerable’ adults) who are not ‘intentionally homeless’ (have not brought about their own homelessness) are entitled to be accommodated until settled housing becomes available (the ‘main homelessness duty’). Certain persons from abroad, including asylum seekers, are not ‘eligible’ for assistance under this legislation. See separate table on eligibility under the homelessness legislation below
 - rough sleepers have had a succession of specialist initiatives aimed at meeting their accommodation and support needs. Again, certain persons from abroad, including asylum seekers, are not ‘eligible’ for assistance under these initiatives
- *What is provided?*
 - for those owed the main homelessness duty, ‘suitable’ temporary accommodation is provided until ‘suitable’ settled housing can be made available (usually in the social rented sector). Non-statutory housing-related support is also available
 - for rough sleepers, a wide range of specialist and resettlement support as well as accommodation is provided

England *continued*

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – the strong legal protection for homeless people (who are eligible, in priority need, and unintentionally homeless); the duty on local authorities to produce homelessness strategies; the range of housing-related support available; specialist help for rough sleepers; strong emphasis on prevention
- *Weaknesses* – possible tension between the new prevention agenda and the traditional legal safety net; absence of rights to emergency accommodation for rough sleepers (unless in a priority need group)

Eligibility under Homelessness Legislation

ELIGIBILITY

Who determines eligibility?

- Regulations made by central government

Means-tested

- No

Minimum income

- No

Minimum age

- 16

Limits on size

- n/a

Excluded groups

- Various categories of persons from abroad

Exclusions: behaviour

- No, but help is restricted if homelessness is result of own behaviour

Immigrants

- Eligible, if EEA national who is 'worker' or self-employed, or has certain other rights to reside and is habitually resident (but if from new eastern European accession states eligibility on basis of being a 'worker' is lost if stop working within first 12 months of continuous employment)
- Eligible, if non-EEA national and has refugee status or other leave with recourse to public funds
- Not eligible, if asylum seeker or has other leave to enter or remain on condition of no recourse to public funds

France

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

- | | |
|---|--|
| Size and trend of social rented sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17.3 per cent (2002) • Stable relatively • Growing absolutely |
| Landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLM (92%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 54 per cent OPAC: public law company – 46 per cent SA: company • SEM (private cos. under local control) |
| Demand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally strong • Some low demand in medium sized towns dependent on single declining industry |
| Security of Tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Eviction procedures lengthy and expensive |

ELIGIBILITY

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Who determines eligibility? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State |
| Means-tested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: three income limits: greater Paris; rest of Ile de France; and rest of France • Also changes according to size of household |
| Minimum income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No |
| Minimum age | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No |
| Limits on size | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No |
| Excluded groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, but nomination rights often used to favour local residents |
| Exclusions: behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not formally, but be taken into account by nominators |
| Immigrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All foreigners with permission to reside in France are eligible • Illegal for social landlords to house illegal immigrants |

ALLOCATIONS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Who determines policies? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government through nomination rights (30 per cent – mostly badly housed or poor) • Local authority through nomination rights (20%) • Employers paying 1 payroll tax (up to 50 per cent in large cities) • Landlords |
|---------------------------------|--|

France continued

Criteria

- Various including need, type of household, means, date order, past behaviour, ability to pay rent

Income mixing

- In principle, but poor end up on the estates with bad images
- More recently new social housing built in attractive neighbourhoods – easier to attract income mix

Vulnerable groups

- ‘Very social’ housing sector established in 1990 to house people excluded from mainstream social housing
- Aimed at people with low incomes and with difficulties with social integration

HOMELESSNESS

Dominant definition of homelessness

Key surveys use a definition similar to US ‘literal homelessness’, that is:

- staying in emergency shelter (or use of hot meal service); or
- sleeping rough

Estimated scale and trends

- In January 2001, over the course of an average week, it was estimated that 86,000 people used a shelter or hot meal service:
 - 16,000 of whom were children
 - 8 per cent of adults surveyed were sleeping rough
- There is no trend data available to gauge whether the scale of homelessness is increasing or decreasing

Profile of homeless population

On an average day in 2001:

- two-thirds of identified homeless people were lone men; and
- one-third had a foreign nationality

Causes

Main causes are:

- relationship breakdown
- unemployment
- eviction/rents too expensive

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- A vociferous protest campaign has resulted in emergency legislation, aimed at establishing a right to housing

France *continued*

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – Central government provides a specific grant to municipalities to fund homelessness services
- *Who provides?* – direct provision is mainly by non-profit organisations (usually charities)
- *Who receives?* – targeting is left to the discretion of local municipalities and charities. Non-French citizens are eligible for help on same basis as French nationals, and even ‘paperless foreigners’ (illegal immigrants) may be given emergency accommodation (though not social housing)
- *What is provided?*
 - short term temporary accommodation in hotels and emergency reception centres
 - ‘Centres for Emergency Reception and Social Re-integration’, with a broader supportive role aimed at assisting people to move on to independent living
 - ‘very social’ housing, aimed at those with difficulty integrating into society

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – some high quality temporary accommodation; attention to reintegration
- *Weaknesses* – absence of a national framework of minimum provision/rights; the potential stigmatising and segregating effects of ‘very social’ housing

Netherlands

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

| | |
|---|--|
| Size and trend of social rented sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 per cent • Declining relatively |
| Landlords | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Association (99%) • Local authority (1%) |
| Demand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, especially in high demand areas where gap between social and market rents the greatest |
| Security of Tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes |

ELIGIBILITY

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Who determines eligibility? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government, but laws differ between municipalities |
| Means-tested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes |
| Minimum income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, for expensive properties |
| Minimum age | – |
| Limits on size | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, mainly in high demand areas |
| Excluded groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • But residence qualifications sometimes applied |
| Exclusions: behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, but anti-social behaviour may make Housing associations 'less co-operative' |
| Immigrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrants are eligible, but landlords must verify legal status of tenant • Termination of residence permit a ground for terminating a tenancy |

ALLOCATIONS

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Who determines policies? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing associations, but have to be consistent with local authority policies (if any) |
| Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlords operating within local authority decrees specifying types of dwellings to be allocated to special categories of residents • Mostly follow 'choice-based' procedure |
| Income mixing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of sector + low rents makes it easy to attract a mix of incomes • Mix expensive with less expensive dwellings • Tenure mixing on new developments |

Netherlands *continued*

- Vulnerable groups**
- Cheaper part of social sector reserved for applicants with a 'priority card'
 - People excluded from the social rented sector, may receive help from a special scheme
 - Otherwise housed in private rented sector, or become homeless

HOMELESSNESS

- Dominant definition of homelessness**
- No official definition. Policy makers and researchers distinguish between
 - 'roofless people'; and
 - 'residential homeless people' (those in more or less permanently living in boarding houses and hostels)

- Estimated scale and trends**
- No robust national-level figures, but estimates of the scale of rooflessness have been made in various cities
 - Two client registration systems are in development and should provide a national data source by 2009

- Profile of homeless population**
- Most homeless people are single men, average age 39
 - 40 per cent have both psychiatric and physical health problems

- Causes**
- Both structural and psycho-social factors are identified

- RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION**
- Legislation specifies that (emergency) accommodation is open to all homeless Dutch citizens, but these provisions are unlikely to be enforced by the courts
 - Those legally permitted to stay in the Netherlands are eligible for this accommodation

- STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE**
- *Who funds?* – central government via a grant to municipalities. A 'Homelessness Action Plan' has been launched by central government and the four major cities
 - *Who provides?* – most direct provision is by NGOs
 - *Who receives?* – targeting is left to the local discretion of municipalities/NGOs. Again, those who are legally permitted to stay in the Netherlands can access these services
 - *What is provided?* Fairly basic provision (night shelters, day centres, hostels, boarding house), but wide local variations in the precise types of homelessness assistance provided. Now more emphasis on prevention (especially related to eviction and leaving institutions) and 'reintegration and recovery' (including access to stable housing)

Netherlands *continued***Strengths and weaknesses**

- *Strengths* – a strong welfare state seems to protect many people who might otherwise become homeless; recent attention to prevention and reintegration
- *Weaknesses* – rudimentary standards of provision; lack of national minimum standards/entitlements

Sweden

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

Size and trend of social/public rented sector

- 17.7 per cent stock and households (2005)
- Slow absolute and relative decline

Landlords

- 100 per cent MHCs

Demand

- Generally strong
- Only 1.7 per cent MHC stock vacant in September 2005
- Some low demand in several small and remote local authorities – even after demolitions vacancy rates can reach 10 per cent

Security of Tenure

- Generally, yes
- But not in 'secondary' housing market

ELIGIBILITY

Who determines eligibility?

- MHCs, within law requiring non-discrimination

Means-tested

- No

Minimum income

- Sometimes – often require applicants to show that income is sufficient to pay rent and regular enough to do so for next 6 months

Minimum age

- 18

Limits on size

- Avoid overcrowding

Excluded groups

- People who have been evicted
- People who had court notification for failure to pay bills in past 3 years
- Rent arrears outstanding with another landlord

Exclusions: behaviour

- Bad payment history
- Anti-social behaviour – complaints from former neighbours
- References required from former landlords

Immigrants

- Citizenship in principle irrelevant
- Residence permit necessary
- Requirement for references from previous landlords may be a problem

Sweden *continued***ALLOCATIONS****Who determines policies?**

- Local authorities determine principles
- Local authorities becoming reluctant to exercise nomination rights

Criteria

- Matching of individual dwellings to individual applicants, transfers
- Medical or social need (local authority nominations)

Income mixing

- Some neighbourhoods middle class; others working class
- Renovation used as a means of mixing
- But ethnic and social/economic segregation has worsened over past decade

Vulnerable groups

- 'Secondary' housing market – but vulnerable groups may even be excluded from this by social landlord, even if rent guaranteed and supervision provided by social services
- If excluded from this then may find emergency housing, or lower end of private rented sector (where there may be less scrutiny), or staying with family/friends, or rough sleeping

HOMELESSNESS**Dominant definition of homelessness**

- Surveys use a relatively wide definition which includes the 'houseless' (living in institutions), and some of those living temporarily with friends and relatives, as well as rough sleepers. Squatters and those with inadequate housing are not included

Estimated scale and trends

- In April 2005, almost 18,000 individuals were identified as having experienced homelessness over the course of a week (a further count is planned for 2007)
- This is an increase of 30-45 per cent since 1999
- The overall scale of homelessness is likely to be severely underestimated in these figures as only homeless people in contact with social work and health services are included

Profile of homeless population

- The profile produced by these official surveys is 'skewed', as homeless people have to have 'additional problems' to be in touch with social work and health services

Causes

- Government have claimed a strong association with drug misuse, but our respondent argues that main problem is access to regular rental housing

Sweden *continued*

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- There are no rights to 'regular' permanent housing for anyone
- There is a legally-enforceable obligation to provide emergency accommodation (under social service legislation) for those who would otherwise sleep rough; but this is conditional on 'good behaviour'. All legal immigrants (including those from the EU/EEA) have the same entitlement as Swedish citizens, but separate arrangements are made for asylum seekers and refugees
- Those with severe disabilities have an enforceable right to long-term accommodation in a 'group home'
- Municipalities also have housing obligations towards elderly people and children, but these are not said to amount to a 'right' to housing
- There is a constitutional right to housing, but this is not legally enforceable

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – municipalities are the main funders. Central government co-funds some projects
- *Who provides?* – municipalities in the main, although NGOs run many shelters and provide support too. There is now some limited provision of services and accommodation by for-profit organisations
- *Who receives?* – targeting is left to local discretion (aside from the legal rights, noted above), but single people as well as families, within a broad definition of homelessness, are usually eligible for help
- *What is provided?* – a 'staircase' of provision, with emergency shelter at the bottom; followed by the 'secondary' housing market, which itself has an internal hierarchy of accommodation with gradually improving standards and security; and 'regular' rental housing at the top. This 'staircase' is reintegrative in principle, but people are often evicted because they fail to conform to expected standards of behaviour, and there is no guarantee of eventual access to the regular housing market even where a client 'behaves well'

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – the relatively strong legal protection for homeless people; the range of housing provision
- *Weaknesses* – potentially segregating and stigmatising impact of the 'secondary' housing market'; the high degree of social control exerted over homeless people while in this system

Spain

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

Size and trend of social rented sector • 1 per cent

Landlords • Public sector or NFPs
• Also: savings banks, insurance cos., private builders and developers

Demand –

Security of Tenure –

ELIGIBILITY

Who determines eligibility? • Rules of social housing programmes set by government

Means-tested • Yes – varies by region

Minimum income • No

Minimum age • 18

Limits on size • Yes

Excluded groups • No – but certain groups such as young people or extended families are prioritised
• Residence qualification required in some areas
• Immigrants often excluded

Exclusions: behaviour • No

Immigrants • Same rights for all EU citizens

ALLOCATIONS

Who determines policies? • Each local authority or regional government

Criteria • Usually by lottery (once fulfilled the criteria)

Income mixing • No specific measures
• New developments must contain some social housing (25 per cent nationally, but varies greatly between regions)

Vulnerable groups • Historically rely on Church and charities
• More public sector and NGOs have emerged to help with rent guarantees, legal aid, damage insurance, etc

Spain *continued*

HOMELESSNESS

Dominant definition of homelessness

- No official definition
- Recently completed survey used definition close to 'literal homelessness', ie roofless or in emergency/temporary accommodation, but also included squatters

Estimated scale and trends

- An estimate of 21,900 was produced in December 2005 based on a detailed research survey of people using homelessness services in urban Spain (22 per cent were sleeping rough)
- There is no trend data available

Profile of homeless population

- Overwhelming majority are men
- Average age is 38
- Almost four in ten have been homeless for more than 3 years
- A large proportion (42%) are immigrants

Causes

- Eviction is a primary cause
- 'Immigrants in vulnerable situations', is viewed as another key factor
- Addiction to drugs and alcohol, is identified as both cause and consequence of homelessness

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- There is a constitutional right to housing, but this is not legally enforceable

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – there is no national programme specifically on homelessness, though there are local schemes, mainly funded by the Catholic Church and NGOs. Some municipalities, particularly in the large cities (eg Barcelona and Seville), fund basic homelessness services, but only around one fifth of all homelessness provision is publicly-funded
- *Who provides?* – most services are provided by the Catholic Church. Almost half of the publicly-funded provision is delivered by NGOs
- *Who receives?* – rough sleepers
- *What is provided?* – tends to be quite basic, eg winter shelters and day centres

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – none
- *Weaknesses* – very patchy and basic public protection for homeless people

Czech Republic

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

- Size and trend of social rented sector**
- 17 per cent (municipal flats)
 - 15 per cent (municipal flats with rent control)

- Landlords**
- Local authorities

- Demand**
- Waiting time in Prague = up to 10 years

- Security of Tenure**
- Yes, for pre-1991 tenancies

ELIGIBILITY

- Who determines eligibility?**
- Local authorities
 - Government where it subsidises new social construction

- Means-tested**
- Yes – for new municipal housing
 - Otherwise up to local authority which usually do have a means-test, but not in two largest local authorities

- Minimum income**
- Points are often awarded for permanent income

- Minimum age**
-

- Limits on size**
- Ministry sets minimum size for new flats

- Excluded groups**
- Almost always a residence qualification (usually 2 years)

- Exclusions: behaviour**
-

- Immigrants**
- Same rights for all EU (but not EEA) citizens, but residence qualifications may act as a bar

ALLOCATIONS

- Who determines policies?**
- Local authorities

- Criteria**
- Much variation
 - Most important criteria: demolition or unhealthy housing conditions
 - Other: overcrowding, residence, source of income, time waited

- Income mixing**
- Few attempts, although tenure is generally mixed
 - A few socially segregated locations

- Vulnerable groups**
- Various types of housing, other than mainstream social housing, are employed, including *holobyt*, lodging houses, half-way houses, temporary housing
 - NGOs have reintegration policies – mostly operating through temporary or shared housing

Czech Republic *continued*

HOMELESSNESS

Dominant definition of homelessness

- There is no official definition, but seems to be understood mainly as rough sleeping

Estimated scale and trends

- Only very rough estimates are available:
 - 4,450-6,200 homeless in urban areas (NGO estimate)
 - 3,000-4,000 homeless nationally (Government estimate)
- Scale is thought to be increasing, but there is no trend data

Profile of homeless population

- Great majority are unemployed lone men, largest group are in 30s

Causes

Main causes are:

- relationship breakdown (largest category)
- eviction due to rent arrears
- leaving prison, drug/alcohol dependency, and health problems also mentioned

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- There are no rights to accommodation

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – central government provides grants directly to NGOs; there are also some services funded independently by municipalities or NGOs
- *Who provides?* – all centrally-funded homelessness services are delivered by NGOs (mainly religious charities). Some non-centrally funded accommodation and other homelessness services are operated directly by municipalities
- *Who receives?* – rough sleepers. EU (but not all EEA) citizens are eligible for temporary accommodation on the same basis as Czech citizens
- *What is provided?*
 - day centres
 - night shelters
 - ‘asylum housing’ (with a reintegrative function)
 - ‘half-way houses’ (aimed at people leaving institutions)
 - ‘lodging houses’ (hostels to which people may move on from above accommodation)³⁶

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – pro-active role of central government, with new legislation and a funding stream now in place
- *Weaknesses* – very low standards of accommodation; very low rate of reintegration into mainstream housing; no focus on prevention

³⁶ As in other countries, social services are provided for a wide range of groups – such as older people, disabled people, and victims of domestic violence – some of whom may be homeless or have housing difficulties. But these are not generally defined as homelessness services and so are not covered here.

Hungary

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

Size and trend of social rented sector

- 4 per cent (2001)
- Large absolute and relative decline since 1990 (23%)

Landlords

- Local authorities – mostly MHCs

Demand

- Strong: demand is 10-15 times greater than supply

Security of Tenure

- Yes
- Also reluctance to evict

ELIGIBILITY

Who determines eligibility?

- Local authorities within vague national law
- LAs must specify eligible income and wealth criteria

Means-tested

- Yes

Minimum income

–

Minimum age

–

Limits on size

- Usually not

Excluded groups

- Former social tenants
- Almost always residence qualification – excludes squatters
- Sometimes also local employment required
- Arrears – rent or utilities

Exclusions: behaviour

–

Immigrants

- In principle can apply, but other criteria may exclude immigrants

ALLOCATIONS

Who determines policies?

- Local authorities

Criteria

- Time + points; 'merit'
- Recommendations of social services which co-operate closely with housing departments

Income mixing

- Where stock larger (big cities) little social polarisation
- Local authority may attempt to upgrade run down areas with over-representation of poor households and Roma – but higher rents may drive out poor

Hungary *continued*

- Vulnerable groups**
- Cheap low quality part of social sector is used to house mostly people with large rent arrears or who have been evicted from other social dwellings ('emergency units')
 - High probability that vulnerable groups will be excluded (eg household inspections often used to assess suitability to live in a particular neighbourhood or building)
 - Excluded may end up in private rented housing, which can be expensive and offers little security

HOMELESSNESS

- Dominant definition of homelessness**
- There is no consistent official definition, but surveys use a definition similar to the US 'literal homelessness', that is:
- people staying in emergency and temporary shelters; or
 - sleeping rough

- Estimated scale and trends**
- No accurate national statistics exist, but a rough estimate was supplied (based on 'stock' counts in Budapest and some other large cities) of between 20,000 and 30,000 homeless people
 - In Budapest, 8,000 'literally homeless' people (including 3,000 people sleeping rough) were identified in a count one night in February 2005
 - There is no robust trend data, but information from service providers suggests increasing numbers of people in crisis situations

- Profile of homeless population**
- Great majority are men, typically aged 30-60 years old, but the proportion of women is increasing
 - A high proportion (almost half) have a disability which prevents them from working
 - The most common income source is various forms of local benefits; one sixth have no income at all

- Causes**
- Main 'immediate' causes are:
 - relationship breakdown (largest category);
 - eviction due to rent arrears or other 'economic' reasons; and
 - leaving institutions, such as orphanages, prison or hospital
 - Underlying structural conditions in both the housing market (lack of affordable accommodation) and labour market (unemployment and low wages) are also cited

Hungary *continued*

RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION

- Elderly and ill homeless people who need long-term care are legally entitled to a place in a 'homeless residential home'
- Homeless families with children are legally entitled to temporary homes under the child welfare system (with a one year tenure, which can be extended for a further year)
- Homeless people whose 'physical well-being is at risk' are legally entitled to accommodation in night/temporary shelters or 'rehabilitation institutions' (but can be excluded on behavioural grounds). Homeless shelters can be used by non-Hungarian citizens who are legally present in Hungary, and whose countries have ratified the European Social Charter
- There were no instances of individuals trying to enforce any of these rights against state authorities using legal procedures; but NGOs use them in their campaigning work

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – The 'compulsory' emergency shelter services are funded via a central government grants to municipalities (see below)
- *Who provides?* – About two-thirds of the 'compulsory' emergency shelter services are provided directly by municipalities, with the remaining third provided by NGOs, churches, etc. NGOs play a larger role in the 'discretionary' services (see below)
- *Who receives?* – Rough sleepers and shelter residents, but help is also given to families under child welfare legislation. There are no legal rules on whether non-Hungarian citizens are eligible for 'discretionary' services
- *What is provided?*
 - 'compulsory' emergency housing assistance, eg night/temporary shelters, 'rehabilitation institutions', and 'residential homes'
 - various 'discretionary' pilot projects seek to reintegrate homeless people, including a new programme that will make available 900 'move-on' rental units where homeless people can stay up to a year with (gradually decreasing) support

Hungary *continued*

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – rapid expansion of services; legal entitlements to accommodation for some groups; pro-active role of central government, with an overall national strategy on homelessness now being developed
- *Weaknesses* – rudimentary nature of emergency/temporary accommodation; insufficient emphasis on prevention; difficulties in gaining access to affordable rented housing

Poland

SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR

- Size and trend of social rented sector**
- 15.8 per cent stock (2002 census)
 - Rental part of co-operative sector usually also treated as part 'social' housing sector (9.3%)

- Landlords**
- Local authorities: 73.3 per cent
 - Government: 11.0 per cent
 - Companies: 13.8 per cent
 - Housing associations: 1.9 per cent

- Demand**
- Strong – especially in cities where nearly 33 per cent households on waiting lists entitled to 'social flats' (those of basic standard let at very low rents)
 - Average wait for regular council flat = 5 years

- Security of Tenure**
- Yes, in mainstream council flats
 - No, in lower standard/lowest rent social flats

ELIGIBILITY

- Who determines eligibility?**
- Generally local authorities within framework of vague constitutional/national criteria
 - General principles for TBS housing set by separate law

- Means-tested**
- Regional income limits for council flats
 - TBS: also set income limits by region and households types

Minimum income –

- Minimum age**
- 18

- Limits on size**
- Minimum size specified

- Excluded groups**
- No
 - Residence qualifications illegal

- Exclusions: behaviour**
- If evicted for arrears may qualify for social housing (ie lower standard, lowest rent flats)

- Immigrants**
- Eligible if have settlement permit, EU residence permit, limited period residence permit, or an asylum seeker

Poland *continued***ALLOCATIONS**

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Who determines policies? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities (for council housing) • TBS: local authorities have nomination rights where they have given subsidies |
| Criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points: time, need, quality of property, medical condition, etc |
| Income mixing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No data available |
| Vulnerable groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If excluded from council housing may be eligible for social housing – but there is a shortage of this |

HOMELESSNESS

| | |
|--|---|
| Dominant definition of homelessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legal definition focuses on having no permanent residence |
| Estimated scale and trends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally, there are said to be around 80,000 homeless people; this is based on surveys in some regions, and takes into account the number of inhabitants in shelters and social care institutions • Repeat surveys in one region (Pomerania) in 2001, 2003 and 2005 indicate that homelessness is increasing |
| Profile of homeless population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority are older homeless men (almost two-thirds of homeless males are aged between 41-60) • More than one third are 'chronically' or 'permanently' homeless |
| Causes | <p>Main causes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationship breakdown • eviction • unemployment • debt |
| RIGHTS TO ACCOMMODATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless people are legally entitled to shelter in hostels, refuges and other institutional settings, and these entitlements are specific enough to be legally enforceable • All EU/EEA citizens are legally entitled to the provision of shelter on the same basis as Polish citizens |

Poland *continued*

STATE-FUNDED HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE

- *Who funds?* – Central government subsidises basic homelessness services via a subsidy to municipalities. The remainder is funded by municipalities
- *Who provides?* – The main responsibility lies with municipalities, but NGOs, churches, etc. are funded to play a role in delivery
- *Who receives?* – a range of groups are covered a major new central government programme (see below)
- *What is provided?*
 - emergency shelter, food and clothing etc
 - a major new programme by central government aims to provide social rented flats and places in temporary facilities for a range of groups, including the ‘permanently homeless’, those fleeing domestic violence, people leaving institutions, etc

Strengths and weaknesses

- *Strengths* – legal entitlements to temporary accommodation; significant new programme subsidised by central government
- *Weaknesses* – rudimentary nature of temporary accommodation; lack of emphasis on prevention; shortage of permanent accommodation

This report presents the findings of an international comparative survey of homelessness and social housing. Desk research was carried out on 11 other countries in addition to England. These included English-speaking, Western, Southern and Central European countries.

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